

# EDUCATIONAL DECENTRALIZATION IN ZAMBIA

AN ANALYSIS OF POLICY AND PRACTICE.

*A Study of Chongwe and Solwezi District Education Boards*

Amos Sikayile



Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

2011

## **Abstract**

Despite various arguments which have been advanced in favour of educational decentralization, there is no ideal version of decentralization. This explains why success or failure in implementation tends to be context based and mostly influenced by a number of factors such as the availability of financial resources. By applying the comparative qualitative case study approach, this research project analysed how institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy affect the implementation of the decentralization policy in Zambia's education sector. In particular, two District Education Boards (DEBs), Chongwe and Solwezi, are studied and compared.

Primary qualitative data was on the one hand, collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. On the other hand, official policy documents and reports were used as important secondary data sources. Nearly 8 informants were drawn from each of the two education boards in addition to the 8 key informants interviewed at the national level. A total of four focus group discussions (2 in each district) involving teachers and parents were organised at the school level in order to solicit views on implementation of the policy from the primary beneficiary's point of view.

The adoption of educational decentralization has, in certain instances, led to positive changes, especially in participation and transparency both at the district and school level. Yet, the manner in which leadership is exercised within the board sets a striking difference between these two cases. Lack of coordination between the DEB secretary and the board chairperson is particularly worrisome in Chongwe compared to Solwezi. Generally this study revealed that implementation is hampered by more serious challenges, with weak institutional capacities and accountability mechanisms. Of particular interest is the weak administrative system as well as lack of a legal framework - a situation which is creating a conducive environment for poor internal and external compact relationships.

Further, the establishment of the education boards resulted in a shift of workloads from the center, but this has been without meaningful transfer of authority to the districts. Contrary to policy provisions, decentralization initiatives in both Chongwe and Solwezi have not relaxed the tight controls from the top. In the case of teacher recruitment and financial matters, for example, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has delegated authority to the DEBs, but in

practice this authority is largely reclaimed. These boards have, therefore, not been able to efficiently make decisions that could support effective implementation of the policy.

Therefore, these findings are consistent with the view that as much as institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy are critical success factors, they are merely a means to an end, since educational decentralization (where not properly implemented) can, in practice, reproduce similar problems as those experienced under centralization. Obviously, further investigation based on mixed methods involving more than two education boards would yield more robust findings and recommendation for improving implementation.

## Statement of Authentication

I hereby certify that the work presented in this thesis is to the best of my knowledge and belief. I further certify that this thesis is my original work, except where I have cited other's research work.

I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part thereof, for a degree at this or any other university. Whatever flaws that might be found in this thesis are exclusively mine.

-----

Amos Sikayile

-----

Date

# Acknowledgement

I would like to convey my gratitude to the following people for providing me with the support and inspiration to embark on my MPhil program. Several words of thanks are in the following order:

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Jon Lauglo, who supported me throughout my thesis with his patience and knowledge whilst giving me the freedom to exercise by intellectual capabilities. I greatly attribute the level of my Masters degree to his encouragement and effort and, without which, this thesis would not have been completed. One simply could not wish for a better or friendlier supervisor than him.

My special thanks also go to Kristi Barcus and Kjerstin Eek Jensen, the CIE Programme coordinators for their administrative support during the entire period of my study at UIO. Special thanks also goes to all the lecturers for the CIE program 2011 intake, especially Dr. Wim Hoppers who provided me with useful insights during the development of the research proposal, as well as in giving feedback on the data collected from the field.

I am indebted to members of the staff at the International Office at the University of Oslo for giving me an opportunity to benefit from the Norwegian State Loan Fund (Lånekassen) through the Quota Scheme Program, without which, it would have been impossible to study in Norway.

A very special thanks to my good friend Mr Harry Tembo for the support rendered during data collection in Chongwe and in Lusaka. This thesis would not have come out the way it did, without assistance from fellow international students from Zambia; Yorum Chama Chama, Hlazo Mkandawire and Martin Mwamba. Their valuable assistance is hereby acknowledged and greatly appreciated. I also extend my sincere gratitude to Shelly Grass and Brianna Andersen, whose priceless effort in editing and proof reading the final version of this thesis made a big difference.

In closing, I want to express my deeper sense of gratitude to all my family members who believed in me. Very special thanks go to one person in particular, whom I owe everything I am today, my mother Muwaye Moono Siamundele. Her unwavering faith and confidence in

my abilities since my teenage years is what has shaped me to be the kind of person I am today. Mom, thank you for being there for me.

Finally and **most importantly**, my heartfelt appreciation goes to my wife **Gloria Hachilenge Sikayile**, for her endless and enormous sacrifices over the years. Honey, thank you for your never-ending belief in me and for our long discussions, especially when I needed encouragement and emotional support – living with someone writing a master thesis can be as demanding as writing it oneself, due to pressure and lack of attention! I look forward to fixing things up!

## List of Acronyms

BESSIP	Basic Education Sub-Sector Implementation Programme
CIE	Comparative and international Education
DDCC	District Development Coordinating Committee
DEMC	District Education Management Committee
DEO	District Education Officials
DESO	District Education Standards Officer
EFA	Education for All
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FNDP	Fifth National Development Plan
FPE	Free Primary Education
GRZ	Government Republic of Zambia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoESP	Ministry of Education Strategic Plan
NDP	National Decentralization Policy
NIF	National Implementation Framework
PDCC	Provincial Development Coordinating Committee
PEMC	Provincial Education Management Committee
PEO	Provincial Education Officer
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SNDP	Sixth National Development Plan
SMB	School Based Management
SMC	School Management Committee
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization

SSA	Sub-Saharan África
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
UIO	University of Oslo
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNIP	United National Independence Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



# Table of Contents

---

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>List of Figures, Tables and Boxes .....</b>	<b>XIII</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background Information .....	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem .....	3
1.3 Justification of the Research Problem .....	5
1.4 Significance of the Study .....	6
1.4.1 Main Objective .....	6
1.4.2 Specific Objectives.....	7
1.5 Structure of the Thesis.....	7
<b>Chapter 2: The Zambian Context .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 The Development of Education in Zambia .....	9
2.2 The Impact of Liberalization Policies .....	10
2.3 Statistical Trends in Enrolment & Participation .....	11
2.4 The Genesis of Decentralization in Zambia .....	12
2.5 Objectives of the Decentralization Policy .....	18
2.6 Decentralizing Zambian's Educational System .....	19
2.6.1 Foundation for Educational Decentralization .....	20
2.6.2 Educational Decentralization efforts under the FNDP.....	21
2.6.3 New District Governance Structure .....	22
2.6.4 Fiscal Decentralization of Basic Education .....	25
<b>Chapter 3: The Nature and Scope of Decentralization.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 Historical Trends .....	27
3.2 The Concept of Decentralization.....	28
3.2.1 Meaning & Scope of Decentralization .....	28
3.2.2 Forms of Decentralization .....	30
3.3 Why Educational Decentralization?.....	33
3.4 Other Mechanisms for Educational Decentralization .....	37
3.4.1 The Rationale for SBM .....	37
3.4.2 Market Efficiency.....	38

<b>Chapter 4: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1 Decentralization: Confusing Benefits?.....	42
4.2 International Experiences on Education Decentralization .....	43
4.2.1 Educational Decentralization in Brazil .....	43
4.2.2 Experiences from New Zealand .....	45
4.2.3 Educational Decentralization in Norway .....	47
4.3 Regional Experiences across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) .....	49
4.3.1 Incentives for Autonomy.....	50
4.3.2 The Rationale for Accountability .....	51
4.3.3 Building Institutional Capacities.....	52
4.4 Other Relevant Case Studies .....	54
4.4.1 Patterns & Policy Implications in West Africa .....	54
4.4.2 Education Decentralization in Kerala State of India. ....	55
<b>Chapter 5: Theoretical &amp; Conceptual Framework .....</b>	<b>58</b>
5.1 Theoretical Framework .....	58
5.1.1 Rationale for the Theoretical Framework .....	58
5.1.2 Overview of Theories on Decentralization .....	58
5.2 Overview of the Conceptual Framework .....	64
5.2.1 Conceptualising the term “Policy” .....	65
5.2.2 Practice of Policy Making .....	66
5.2.3 The Concept of Accountability .....	67
5.2.5 Conceptualizing the term “Power” .....	70
5.2.6 Conceptualizing “Institutional Capacity” .....	70
<b>Chapter 6: The Methodology .....</b>	<b>72</b>
6.1 General Overview .....	72
6.2 Location & Rationale for the choice of the sites .....	76
6.2.1 The Process of Fieldwork.....	78
6.2.2 The Targeted Population .....	78
6.2.3 Accessibility to Respondents .....	81
6.2.4 My Role as a Researcher .....	83
6.2.5 Ethical Considerations.....	84
6.3 Data Collection Methods.....	84
6.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI) .....	85

6.3.2	Focus Group Discussion (FGD).....	86
6.3.3	Analysis of Official Documents.....	87
6.4	Major Limitations.....	88
6.4.1	Time Constraints .....	88
6.4.2	Ethical Constraints .....	88
6.4.3	Power Asymmetry.....	89
6.5	Data Quality Strategy .....	89
6.5.1	Constructing Validity .....	90
6.5.2	Constructing Reliability .....	91
<b>Chapter 7:</b>	<b>Data Processing and Presentation .....</b>	<b>93</b>
7.1	Data Processing Procedure.....	93
7.2	Transcribing Interviews.....	94
7.3	Data Organization .....	95
7.4	Data Coding Process .....	96
7.5	Identification of Themes .....	97
7.6	Data Presentation and Display .....	98
<b>Chapter 8:</b>	<b>Data Analysis and Findings.....</b>	<b>102</b>
8.1	Institutional Capacity .....	102
8.1.1	Organizational Support .....	102
8.1.2	Organizational Realignment.....	104
8.1.3	Capacity to Implement .....	107
8.2	Accountability: To Who, Why, and How?.....	108
8.2.1	Shared Responsibility.....	109
8.2.2	Administrative Control.....	111
8.2.3	The Rationale for Efficiency .....	113
8.3	Local Autonomy: Freedom or striking a balance? .....	114
8.3.1	Self-Management .....	115
8.3.3	School Based Management (SBM) .....	118
8.4	Major Differences and Similarities. ....	120
8.5	Discussion of Findings .....	124
8.5.1	How does institutional capacity affect the implementation of educational decentralization?.....	124

8.5.2	How does accountability influence success or constrain the implementation of the educational decentralization policy? .....	126
8.5.3	In which way does the transfer of responsibilities and power influence local autonomy of education boards?.....	129
<b>Chapter 9:</b>	<b>Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>131</b>
9.1	Summing up .....	131
9.2	Conclusions of key Findings .....	133
9.3	Recommendations .....	136
9.4	The Way Forward.....	137
<b>References</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>139</b>

# List of Figures, Tables and Boxes

---

## Figures

Figure 1: Enrolment Distribution in Basic Schools by Running Agency .....	12
Figure 2: Presidential Foreword on Decentralization Policy in 2003 .....	17
Figure 3: Governance Structure showing different actors at the district level .....	24
Figure 4: Decentralization versus Centralisation Approaches .....	29
Figure 5: Experiences of Educational Decentralization Reforms in Norway at Elementary School Level.....	49
Figure 6: Public Education Accountability Framework.....	68
Figure 7: Map of Zambia showing sites for the study.....	77
Figure 8: Linkages between different Levels of Informants .....	80
Figure 9: A Mind Map Presentation of Summarised Data.....	101
Figure 10: Demonstration of Shared Responsibility through Participatory Planning at District Level.....	110

## Tables

Table 1: Summary of Experiences from Selected SSA Countries .....	54
Table 2: A Comparative Summary of Main Findings .....	121

## Boxes

Box 1: The Vision and Objectives of the National Decentralization Policy in Zambia .....	18
Box 2: Concepts for Analysis of Education Provision through School Based Management (SBM).....	38
Box 3: Lessons on Educational Decentralization Leaned from Brazil .....	45

## Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	149
Appendix B : Guiding Framework for Interview References.....	153
Appendix C: Fieldwork Introductory Letter (UIO).....	154
Appendix D: Fieldwork Clearance Letter (MoE Lusaka).....	155

# Chapter 1: The Introduction

---

“A core idea about decentralization is that it does not simply imply abandonment’ by the state but rather a ‘change in the role of the state’. ‘Where its supervision and support are weak and its absence is not made up for by strong local autonomy, institutional capacity and accountability, the inefficiencies and sluggishness that characterises central government can be replicated if not multiplied at the lower levels’. Thus, decentralization is neither a panacea nor a shortcut”<sup>1</sup> (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2010: 145).

The current state of educational decentralisation process in Zambia is fraught with a lot of implementation under-currencies, ranging from policy rhetoric to the actual transfer of educational responsibilities and powers based on attractive claims not backed by tangible results at least so far. However, it may be necessary to emphasize from the onset that the troubled implementation of educational decentralization in Zambia is, in fact, a common problem for most countries in the Sub Saharan African (SSA) region. While educational decentralization is appealing and logical, the tendency in the region has often been devolution of functions without appropriate mechanisms for improving institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy all of which are crucial in as far as effective implementation is concerned. The principal argument in this thesis, however, is that much as institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy are critical success factors, they are merely a means and not ends in themselves since educational decentralization can in practice, rather than in theory, lead to the transfer of the same problems experienced at the centre to local units.

The aim of this study, therefore, was to examine the Zambian model of educational decentralization by analysing what appears to be a widening gap between “policy and practice” (i.e implementation). This was achieved by analysing the implications of institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy which are crucial towards implementation of the educational decentralization in Zambia. Although selected models of decentralization from different parts of the world were highlighted, the main focus in this study was on the recently established District Education Boards (DEBs) since these are the key custodians for implementing the policy in Zambia. Being a comparative case study,

---

<sup>1</sup> The idea put across by Lugaz & De Grauwe in my opinion; underlie the fact that different countries have their peculiar contextual differences suggesting that decentralisation cannot be implemented in a “straight-jacket approach”. It is no wonder, these researchers argued that some municipalities, districts, and schools have all they need to benefit from more autonomy, while others need support, guidance and control because decentralisation requires “flexible implementation” which should be based on a balance between autonomy and characteristics beneficiaries

two districts were selected (i.e. Chongwe and Solwezi) in order to identify and analyse the implications if any, of their comparable differences or similarities in implementation. Thematically, the study was centred on basic education since this is the level under the jurisdiction of the Boards. Having said that, the three key research questions which this study sorts to answer are as follows;

- How does institutional capacity influence success or constrain effective implementation of educational decentralization?
- How does accountability in a devolved education system affect the implementation of decentralization?
- In which way does the transfer of power and/or authority or lack of these aspects affect local autonomy of education boards?

Other than being the point of departure, these searching questions underline my subjective perception that the implementation of educational decentralization is quite often taken for granted. Expected benefits can be yielded even when there has been no considerable assessment of what might be crucial success factors. Furthermore, there is a grave tendency especially in developing countries such as Zambia to view educational decentralization as if it is a panacea for improving education service delivery at the local level without proper assessment of crucial success related determinants (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000).

## **1.1 Background Information**

Educational decentralization is not a new concept. Rather, it is an old but complex phenomenon with perplexing differences in terms of its implementation and impact. It is also arguably one of the policy measures often adopted in order to accelerate access to and quality of education in many parts of the world (Fiske, 1996; World Bank, 2007). Yet, country settings, political systems and philosophical values about education differ to the extent that policy processes and implementation and more so lessons learnt equally vary significantly from one country to another (Winkler, 1993; Kalsen, 2000). Questions can be asked: Why decentralization? What exactly does it mean? What are its key implications?



There are no clear cut answers to these questions but one thing is clear: There are considerable differences in terms of ideological views and arguments as to why decentralization is regarded not only as a policy objective, but also as a management strategy for improving the delivery of public services such as education (World Bank, 2007). The widespread adoption of educational decentralization reforms in developing countries may, for instance, be motivated by the advent of multiparty values in Africa, deepening democratization in Latin America and, to a large extent, the perceived failure by Central government to provide public services in an efficient, effective and equitable manner (Latvack.,et al, 1998).

Other proponents advocate for decentralization policy reforms purely on efficiency, effectiveness and financial grounds. Understandably, the education sector which is particularly prone to reforms has provided a fertile ground for the proliferation of decentralization initiatives (UNESCO, 2005). However theoretically sound these assumptions may be, they seem to stretch reality beyond breaking point. As the literature review will show, there is evidence pointing to a mixture of results emerging from the implementation of decentralization policies. Just as much as successes, failures in implementation are often attributed to intuitional capacity, accountability and local autonomy factors.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Zambia's National Education Policy highlights a number of benefits regarding decentralization. However, its implementation reflects serious discrepancies which are likely to render the on-going process of decentralization to nothing much but a white elephant. According to the policy, "the establishment of the DEBs is supposed to improve effectiveness and efficiency in basic education delivery by bringing decision making closer to the people. In addition, decentralization is also seen as a mechanism for enhancing community participation through promotion of a deep sense of shared responsibility and ownership in basic education (MoE, 1996).

It has been nearly ten years since the decentralization policy was adopted, yet there is no meaningful progress to show that the implementation is moving in the right direction towards achieving the set goals. Admittedly, it is highly daunting to precisely pin-point the

root cause of the problem due to a myriad of interconnected factors. For the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to situate the ‘statement of problem’ around three key factors which are institutional capacity, level of accountability and local autonomy. In fact, these factors are cited in the Decentralization Secretariat Annual Report of 2008 as some of the crucial challenges that are affecting the implementation of decentralization at the local level.

One wonders: Why pursue a complex policy like educational decentralization when the capacity of your district level institutions is considerably weak? Besides, is implementing such a policy amidst low levels of accountability and local autonomy a rational choice? It is presumably a futile agenda to undertake decentralization initiatives when your institutional capacity is weak and where there is no political will or commitment to increase the degree of local autonomy or promote accountability at the district level. Bear in mind that these obstacles do not just reflect what may be prevailing in Zambia, but have equally triggered inefficiencies which have substantially compromised decision making and effective delivery of education services by education boards.

It has been argued that where local level capacities are weak, the center tends to impose substantial administrative controls which, in the end, curtails efficiency and local innovation at the local level (USAID, 2009). Others have argued that, “while autonomy may be an outcome of the decentralization process, decentralization alone cannot guarantee that local level entities can make independent decisions” (Coleman & Early, 2005:73). Based on these assertions, one would suggest that power and authority for decision making has not been fully transferred to DEBs in Zambia since MoE top officials still exercise arbitrary powers on matters such as annual planning and budgeting at the local level (IOB; 2008). This tendency neither fosters real sense of local ownership nor effective management of education services by DEBs. These are not only serious, but rather grave concerns reflecting the current situation in the Zambian context. They, to a large extent, provide sufficient basis for anchoring the statement of the problem for this study.

### **1.3 Justification of the Research Problem**

As highlighted in the Dakar framework of EFA goals of 2000, the objective of educational decentralization is to contribute towards increased access to and quality of education. While there are various factors which can contribute to the achievement of this objective, country specific challenges make processes of decentralization turn out fruitless. In the absence of stronger institutional capacities, there can be lapses in implementation process. Besides, accountability can equally be dealt a big blow where effective stakeholder participation for instance, is compromised since it is an essential success factor for implementing decentralization reforms at the district level (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2007). Suffice the view that local autonomy poses striking contradictions in a decentralized education system, there is also evidence suggesting that, “it is a necessary luxury for local actors” (Dillon, 2011) in any decentralized system such as that of Zambia. Dillon added that where autonomy substantially lacks, implementers have no flexibility or freedom for innovation on how best to provide education. To some extent, however, this is only possible if strong leadership and professional capacity is in place.

In Zambia, the perceived weak institutional capacities as well as low levels of accountability and local autonomy at the district level immensely underline the low levels of progress and explain why DEBs are seemingly inhibited in their implementation of the policy (MoE & SNV, 2009). Furthermore, the current level of success attests to the fact that the expected benefits of decentralization are still far-fetched. For instance, the Impact Evaluation Report by the Dutch Development Agency (IOB, 2008) highlighted undesirable educational outcomes around issues of access and quality of basic education especially in rural areas. The Report shows, “that poor accountability mechanisms and lack of sufficient autonomy at the district level had contributed to the deterioration and stagnation in the quality basic education” (p.47). In order to remedy the situation, the IOB 2008 report recommended improvements in institutional capacities and accountability mechanisms among other related aspects pointing out that government should let go of the necessary powers and authority instruments, which the DEBs throughout the country badly needs. In view of this discussion, the research questions raised earlier are critical as they offer an opportunity to explore the extent of the problem and to shade more light on its implications.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Educational decentralization is a highly contentious theme surrounded by principles which are not easy to understand (Weiler, 1990). Despite claims that institutional capacity, accountability, and autonomy are cornerstones of a well decentralized education system, these principles present tough challenges which can be difficult to deal with. For example, the study by Dillon in 2011 questioned the perceived significance of local autonomy of sub national units in a decentralized education system. Dillon argued that if local autonomy influences success or failure in the implementation of educational decentralization, should it then be limited to only promising education boards in order to reduce risks associated with self-governing? Drawing on Dillon's study, one wonders how education boards in Zambia can use autonomy as well as accountability and institutional capacity to improve the implementation of the policy or, indeed, how these factors can stimulate better implementation in the absence of country specific lessons to be used as a point of reference.

This study, therefore, is important because of its implications for generating knowledge that may be useful for addressing issues raised and for answering the principal research questions of this study. Although there are many studies which have contributed in understanding the nature and impact of educational decentralization in various parts of the world (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2007; Naidoo, 2002; UNESCO, 2005), the Zambian case is characterized by knowledge gaps on how institutional capacity, accountability, and local autonomy play out when it comes to transforming policy into practice. On that note, this study is not only considered significant, but also timely. The objectives below are meant to set in operation the research questions and as well as to outline the scope of the study design.

### **1.4.1 Main Objective**

- The main objective of the study is to analyse the implications of institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy in the implementation of the decentralisation policy in Zambia. Since these factors are regarded as critical in the success of educational decentralization reforms, it was crucial for this study to explore how they affect implementation.

### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

- To analyse how institutional capacity and accountability affect the functioning of Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs
- To examine how the transfer of responsibilities and authority from national level influences the autonomy of education boards and schools.
- To highlight similarities and differences on how institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy affect the implementation of the educational decentralization policy between the two study sites.

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

Overall, this thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first introduces the aim, research questions and objectives of the study. The background information is the foundation on which the problem statement, significance and justification of the study are anchored. On the other hand, the contextual framework presented in Chapter II provides an overview of Zambia's education system and shows how educational decentralization has emerged and developed over years. Like in many developing countries, Zambia's education system has evolved over years but given the context, previous educational policy reforms and experiences have had an impact in shaping the country's on-going educational decentralization process.

No one can disagree that globalisation has had a great impact in the spread of decentralization reforms around the world. Carnoy (1999) argues in detail about ways in which globalization is having a major impact on education. In financial terms, for instance, governments are under pressure to reduce increases on education public spending and to find other alternatives of funding for expanding their educational systems. Chapter III, therefore, discusses the nature and scope of decentralization in terms of its meaning, different forms, and how these relate to each other in education. It ends by examining its rationale and relating mechanisms which influence the implementation of educational decentralization.

The literature review is presented in Chapter IV. It begins by consolidating on key aspects of decentralization discussed in chapter III. Thereafter, literature on educational decentralization experiences from selected countries is discussed side by side with the

identification not only of success factors but also inconsistencies or gaps which relate to the study at hand. It is this discussion which sets the basis for Chapter V through which the study design in terms of theoretical and conceptual frameworks are outlined. While the theoretical framework presents the theories applied, the conceptual framework, on the other hand, defines the key concepts and shows how they relate to each other within the wider context of the study design.

The objective of any study is to secure answers to those questions raised by the researcher. Then, depending on the nature of the research, one has to apply particular scientific procedures, or the methodology. The methodology used in this project is discussed in Chapter VI. Essentially, this chapter outlines the research strategy and justifies the rationale for the choice of the data collection techniques. Above all, additional information is provided regarding the justification for choice of the research setting; target population; the sample size and sampling technique employed. Besides highlighting on ethical considerations, limitations encountered, as well as selected principles of data quality are also analysed.

Chapter VII builds on the methodology (data collection plan) by describing how the raw data from the field was processed and presented in readiness for analysis and discussion. Other than explaining the how interviews were transcribed, this chapter also touches demonstrates how data organization and coding were done leading into the identification of themes. Without proper presentation of data, data analysis can be quite challenging. By applying the technique of mind mapping, introduced by Tony Buzan, the processed data was then easily presented, on the basis of which, data analysis was done.

Chapter VIII is devoted towards data analysis and discussing the main findings. It is divided into two parts thus; the data analysis and discussion of findings. Guided by the study design, these two analytical perspectives are presented based on the evidence from the field gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of policy documents.

Last but certainly not the least is chapter IX where the summary, conclusions, recommendations and the way forward are presented. The recommendations are twofold. Those with implications for possible policy reforms on the one hand, and those for laying a foundation for future research on the other.

## Chapter 2: The Zambian Context

---

This chapter provides the background on the decentralization reform process in Zambia. This brings into perspective the historical developments which have since set the stage by shaping the subsequent reforms implemented over years to date. However, emphasis is placed on contextualizing the history of educational decentralization in Zambia. Given the length constraints, this chapter only highlights those salient aspects which are considered to be of significant bearing to this study.

### 2.1 The Development of Education in Zambia

Just like in other British colonies, Christian missionaries took a leading role in introducing, administering and funding schools in Zambia although this was under the auspices of the indigenous citizens, mainly traditional chiefs (Mwanakatwe, 1974). Western models of education were dominant in all missionary founded schools. According to Coombe (1967), most of these schools had coherent structures and strong religious orientations such that during the initial economic and political hardships, many of them remained resilient to the inadequacies of the central government. Generally, Zambia's education system between 1924 and 1964 was characterized by inequitable and segregationist patterns between African and European children, but mainly it was used as a tool for promoting "*indirect rule*" (Mwanakatwe, 1974). What might also be disturbing is the fact that, despite the country's increased economic fortunes from copper export earnings in the early 1920s, the British government continued to pay a lip-service towards the plight of African children's education.

At the time of political independence in 1964, the education sector was faced with serious challenges, many of which were transferred to the new administration. As reported by Mwanakatwe in 1974, the education system inherited by the United National Independence Party (UNIP) government was accordingly underdeveloped added to the fact that there were few Zambians who were educated enough to fill in the administrative positions left by the colonialists. Around 1964, for instance, Zambia only had 110, 200 indigenous citizens who had completed six years of primary schooling with the total number of university graduates as low as 107, of which four were females (Mwanakatwe, 1974). This

forced Kaunda<sup>2</sup> during the inauguration ceremony of the first Chancellor for the University of Zambia to launch a scathing attack on the British. He said...

“I have to reiterate on this most important occasion what I have said already in the past, that as far as education is concerned, Britain’s colonial record in Zambia is most criminal. This country has been left by her as the most uneducated and most unprepared of all Britain’s dependencies on the African continent. This record is even treasonable to mankind when it is recalled that in the 70 years of British occupation, Zambia has never lacked money, save for a year or two, her budget had never been subsidized by the British treasury” (Lungu, 1993: 207).

Later on, in 1966, the Education Act was enacted by the government. This placed all grant-aided schools under the control of the government. As far as Kelly (1991) is concerned, this move progressively curtailed the control of schools by racial and religious bodies, though major differences remained among schools founded by different entities. To date, all faith-based-founded schools are jointly controlled by faith-based institutions and by the government through the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Consequently, the amended Education Act of 1994 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic was introduced in order to encourage the establishment of private schools in Zambia. Both Mwanakatwe (1974) and Snelson (1974) point to the fact that this Act streamlined the requirements and procedures for establishing and operating a private school. As a result, a few more religious founded schools and a couple of international schools were established. Private colleges were also established and today we can even talk of universities. The growth of private schools has been slow until after 1991 when education provision was liberalized. Free Primary Education (FPE) from grade 1-7 came even later in 2002 when the declaration was made by the government (MoE, 2003). Several factors caused private and community based education to grow exponentially towards the late 1990s. Some of these factors included economic and political stability—furthering privatization and universalizing primary education—which contributed toward increased school enrolments and general participation.

## **2.2 The Impact of Liberalization Policies**

The liberalization policies introduced in the early 1990s by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) brought about the establishment of many schools. Many of these

---

<sup>2</sup> Kaunda was the first Republic President of Zambia. His rule lasted up to 27 years since 1964.



newly established schools are privately owned, while others are run by communities, but the quality has gradually been eroded. This initiative of liberalization led to increased accessibility. However, sad realities began to emerge in that better equipped private schools were filled with well trained teachers but were almost discriminatory in favour of children from well-to-do families. But there are as well many impoverished private schools for pupils of low socio-economic status and/or with low academic achievement which are poorly equipped and staffed with ill-paid teachers in order to keep the tuition cost affordable for parents (IOB, 2008).

Data from the Education Statistical Bulletin of 2009 indicates that FPE is making an impact in terms of increased pupil enrolments from grades 1 to 9 but until secondary education is universalized, chances are that the country will continue to experience a steady growth of private secondary schools surviving on meager resources (MoE, 2009). Despite the increasing demand, there were very few public secondary schools which were built compared to primary schools and, of course, mushrooming community schools. With the commercialization of secondary and higher education, private secondary schools, colleges and universities emerged which supplemented what used to be exclusively public funded tertiary education (MoE, 2007).

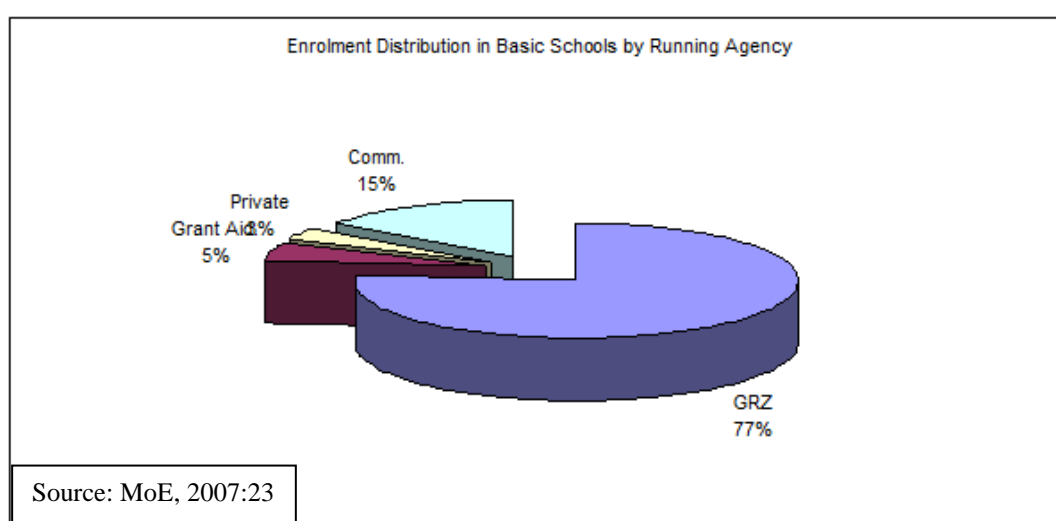
## **2.3 Statistical Trends in Enrolment & Participation**

The MMD's liberalization policies of the early 1990s remarkably transformed the education sector in many ways, especially in terms of enrolment and pupil participation. Through the Basic Education Sub Sector Implementation Programme (BESSIP), considerable gains were achieved particularly for lower and middle basic education levels. These include higher enrolment rates, construction and rehabilitation of more classrooms and an increase in the number of teachers (MoE, 2007). In 2006 for instance, the total number of pupil enrolment for Grades 1 to 9 rose to 2,982,718 from 2,852,370. These figures represented an increase of 4.6 % for the same level. Increasing statistics were also recorded for the Grades 1 to 7 levels, such that enrolments for 2006 stood at 2,678,610, representing an increase of 4.3 % from the figure of 2005 that stood at 2,567,353 (GRZ, 2006). Having stagnated for so long, enrolments for Grades 8 to 9 equally increased from 285,017 in 2005 to 304,108 in 2006 representing a rise of 6.7%. Despite these gains, BESSIP began to face challenges. For example, it came to light that approximately 30% of children in the

school-going age were not enrolled, which translated into nearly 620,000 children. This challenge was particularly high in rural areas (MoE, 2003).

Just as in 2005, the majority of the pupils were enrolled in GRZ schools representing a proportion of 77% of all pupils compared to 80% in 2005. Interestingly, community schools emerged as the second heightened category of enrolment in 2005 catering for 15% compared to that of grant aided and private schools which was around 5% of all pupils countrywide.

**Figure 1: Enrolment Distribution in Basic Schools by Running Agency**



## 2.4 The Genesis of Decentralization in Zambia

“...when adopting decentralisation reforms, governments’ usually present major administrative reorganization as the main reason for improving administrative performance.... Yet, in many cases, the administrative rationale is advanced in order to cover up for unstated political reasons behind undertaking decentralisation measures. In such situations, the unstated political reasons are more paramount than the concerns for improving administrative performance” (Mukwena, 2001:1)

The decentralization policy in Zambia is not a recent phenomenon. It is rather a policy reform strategy which dates as far back as 1964 when the country gained its political independence from British rule. In fact, the National Decentralization Policy [NDP] of 2002 shows that the country has since 1964 to date undergone five phases of decentralisation. Looking at the experiences however, one gets a sense that there has been

tedious protractions along the way<sup>3</sup>. Prior to decentralisation, all systems of public service delivery were centralized under the national government and district/municipality structures. Districts implemented policies that were chosen by the government and carried out activities on behalf of central government (Mukwena, 2001).

Note, however, that before independence in 1964, the colonial administration had put in place some form of 'decentralized structures' through which the education system was administered at different levels of the country (Henkel, 1996). But taking into account the racial segregation and discrimination practices by the colonial regime at that time, it is questionable whether or not the objectives of their decentralization initiatives were genuinely in line with the fundamental tenet of bringing government closer to the people by allowing them to directly participate in national matters such as education. As much as decentralization is often adopted for various reasons, what would have been more critical than involving the indigenous people in decision-making? Critics perceived such initiatives as a gimmick aimed at appeasing the masses to believe that the British had their interests in education at stake when in actual fact they were fully committed towards pursuing their own (Walter, 1972).

The dual system of administration, which existed at the time of independence, comprised both the field and the local government administration which, according to Mukwena (2001), was designed for colonial convenience. Native authority structures at the sub-district level instead, saved to hoodwink indigenous citizens by believing that they were part and parcel of the administrative machinery. In reality, however, real authority for almost all decisions pertaining to education provision rested in the hands of the Resident Commissioner at the national level, the Provincial Commissioner and the District Commissioner - all of whom saved to promote colonial interests (GRZ, 2002).

---

<sup>3</sup> According to the national decentralization policy of 2002, the process of decentralization in Zambia is divided into the following phases;

Phase I	-	1964-1970
Phase II	-	1971-1979
Phase III	-	1980-1990
Phase IV	-	1991-2000
Phase V	-	2000 to date

Having realized that the colonial administrative system was faulty, the UNIP government made radical changes which were aimed at meeting the political and economic goals on the newly independent nation. One of the UNIP government's most urgent tasks was to transform the inherited structure of provincial administration - the focal point of the colonial system of government into a vehicle of economic development (Tordoff, 1980). Consequently, the colonial system of provincial and district government was abolished to pave the way for a more limited structure at the provincial and district levels. The mandate of these new administrative structures was to coordinate and implement government policies and provide a link between government and the new sub-national units which also accommodated party politics (Mukwena, 2001). As a result, even though rural councils participated in managing primary education, their role was, to a large extent, minimal compared to those officials who exercised power within the party structures.

Generally, the period between early 1960s to mid-1970s was remarkable in the sense that district administration and councils played a pivotal role in providing public services such as housing and education. The fact that the national economy performed buoyantly explains why these institutions did not falter in performing their responsibilities since their financial muscles were strong (Tordoff, 1980). Unfortunately, the success enjoyed by councils could not be sustained due to external and internal factors. By the year 1975 up to late 1990s, the provision of public services began to deteriorate due to weak regulatory framework and poor implementation of the local government system. Education in particular was one of the key public services which were badly affected particularly in rural areas (GRZ, 2009).

Expectedly but also within the context of the national decentralization framework, the transition from one party state rule to multi-party democracy in 1991, fuelled renewed attempts to restructure the local government system in order to address the perceived ills in service delivery (GRZ, 2009). Besides the clear articulation of the country's governance framework, the introduction of the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP), as well as the legislative amendments of the Local Government Act are some of the key policy instruments adopted by the MMD government.

Despite the above measures, the country did not record meaningful changes as far as improvements in service delivery were concerned. For example, the Provincial Development Coordinating Committees (PDCCs) and the District Development Coordinating Committees (DDCCs) remained largely ineffective (GRZ, 2008). Government reports (GRZ, 2002 & 2009) indicate that the progress was considerably curtailed because government merely de-concentrated its responsibilities. In practice, authority and the much needed resources did not go far enough in addressing challenges of service provision such as basic education, which in any case, had already suffered huge setbacks towards the end of the one party state rule. Contrary to the 'policy measures' put in place in 1991<sup>4</sup>, poor accountability, weak institutional capacity and worsening fiscal bottlenecks at the district level compromised the vision of transforming the local government system. In addition, the nonexistence of sub-district level structures negated active community participation towards the development programs such as primary education at the local level.

Against this background, the MMD government under the leadership of President Levy Patrick Mwanawasa ushered the country into the fifth or rather current phase of the decentralization program effectively through the adoption of the policy in November 2002. Therefore, the current process is a recent one and meaningful transfer of authority from the centre to lower level units is expected to be gradual. Nevertheless, the fact that the policy was launched two years after its adoption gives an indication of how complex decentralization policy reforms can be. For example, a study on national education policies and practices from 5 Latin American countries revealed that decentralization is a long term social, political, economic and technical process associated with tensions, conflicts and sometimes adverse effects which, nonetheless, have to be well managed throughout the successive stages of implementation (UNESCO, 2005).

---

<sup>4</sup> Emanating from the political dispensation of 1991 which led to the transition from one party state rule to multiparty democracy, the following policy instruments (Refer to the NDP 2002:4-5) were legislated;

- a. At national level, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing was created and was responsible for local government administration while Cabinet office was responsible for provincial and district administration.
- b. At the province, the position of Deputy Minister was created and the office bearer headed the provincial administration with the assistance of the Permanent Secretary. However, Provincial heads of departments continued to be answerable to their respective ministry headquarters
- c. The position of head of district administration was not established at the district level but instead the Town Clerk or Council District Secretary coordinated all sector ministry activities.

Further, the MMD government in 1995, established the National, Provincial and District Development Coordinating Committees to coordinate development activities such as basic education at different levels

Invariably, the major reason for embracing decentralization in Zambia can be seen as a response to the wave of decentralization reforms which swept across SSA (Naidoo, 2002). Hence, the decision to adopt the decentralization policy in Zambia ought to be seen within the contextual series of other initiatives that preceded it whose rationale was to address public service delivery shortcomings, particularly at the local level. Essentially, the decentralization policy of 2002 forms an integral part of GRZ's national development agenda articulated in the PSRP of 1993, whose aim was to improve the quality, delivery, efficiency and cost effectiveness of public services. For this reason, the decentralization policy was mainstreamed across key sector ministries, such as agriculture and education (GRZ, 2009). It appears, therefore, that the adoption of the policy was politically driven. That is often the case in many countries, but one wonders whether the high hopes of the policy in this case were based on realistic assessment of the effects of decentralization or political and administrative convenience.

**Figure 2: Presidential Foreword on Decentralization Policy in 2003<sup>5</sup>**

### **FOREWORD**

The long term vision of Government is to achieve a fully decentralized and democratically elected system of governance characterized by open, predictable and transparent policy making and implementation processes, effective local community participation in decision-making, development and administration while maintaining sufficient linkages between central government and the periphery.

To attain this vision, Government will review and streamline the current organisation structures; and outline the functions to be performed at each level. Comprehensive legislation to back the implementation of the Decentralisation Policy will be enacted.

The Government will devolve all functions except those strategic in character to Councils which are local bodies comprising democratically elected representatives. However, government realizes that currently the capacity to attain such decentralised system of government does not exist and therefore decided to deconcentrate some of its functions, powers and resources to provincial, district and sub-district levels while the necessary capacities are developed in the Councils.

In addition, Government will empower Councils upon attainment of relevant capacity to determine, manage and control the districts' human, material and financial resources.

The time frame for implementing of policy is ten (10) years from the time of adoption. The successful implementation of this policy will require concerted efforts and commitment to stakeholders at all levels. I, therefore, wish to urge all institutions and persons charged with the responsibility of implementing the various aspects of this policy to apply themselves fully to the tasks that lie ahead.

**Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, SC**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

(i)

<sup>5</sup> An excerpt from the national decentralization policy of 2002

## 2.5 Objectives of the Decentralization Policy

The Zambian government perceived many benefits of decentralizing the national governance system. As reflected in the NDP of 2009, it was anticipated that the implementation of decentralization would lead to improved efficiency in decision-making, better co-ordination of development activities at the local level, enhanced community participation in development, and improved transparency and accountability to mention but a few. But the fact that decentralization was part of a wider political and economic reform makes it unlikely that careful thought about its far-reaching implications was accorded time. On this basis, one can argue that the current process of decentralization was hurriedly adopted without proper reflections on models which have proved workable elsewhere. That aside, the vision and objectives of the national decentralization policy which guided reforms in the education sector are presented below.

### Box 1: The Vision and Objectives of the National Decentralization Policy in Zambia

#### The Vision

[.....] 2.1 Government's long term vision is;

to achieve a fully decentralized and democratically elected system of governance characterized by open, predictable and transparent policy making and implementation processes, effective community participation in decision-making, development and administration of their local affairs while maintaining sufficient linkages between the center and the periphery.

2.1 [...] the achievement of the above vision rests on the following objectives;

- (a) Empower local communities by devolving decision-making authority, functions and resources from the center to the lowest level with matching financial resources in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services;
- (b) Design and implement mechanisms to ensure a "bottom-up" flow of integrated development planning and budgeting from the District to the Central Government;
- (c) Enhance political and administrative authority in order to effectively and efficiently deliver services to the lowest level;
- (d) Promote accountability and transparency in the management and utilization of resources
- (e) Develop the capacity of Councils and communities in development planning, financing, coordinating and managing the delivery of services in their areas;
- (f) Build capacity for development and maintenance of infrastructure at local level;
- (g) Introduce an integrated budget for district development and management; and
- (h) Provide a legal and institutional framework to promote autonomy in decision-making at local level.

**Source: (GRZ, 2009:9)**



## **2.6 Decentralizing Zambia's Educational System**

As stated earlier, the current form of educational decentralization in Zambia is closely associated with the 1996 PRSP process which coincided with the national policy on education of 1996. The objective of the policy was to re-structure MoE as way of remedying the ills of a centralized system that was characterized by high levels of inefficiencies and marginalization of communities in planning and decision-making (MoE, 2010). Note that educational decentralization in Zambia is not, per se, an isolated sector reform as it was in some other countries such as Sri Lanka and Australia. Policy makers never submitted a proposal on educational decentralization to cabinet or parliament as such. Rather, the Zambian process of decentralization emerged with a national character by integrating all sectors of national development (GRZ, 2009).

Zambia seems to be more cautious in its implementation of educational decentralization, in that the country has since the adoption of the policy in 2002, it has avoided a total overhaul of the education system. For countries such as Uganda, the approach was somewhat radical with far-reaching changes. Contrary to good lessons in education, “the Ugandan approach sought to monopolize power and entrench the ruling party at the expense of its competitors in ways that mirror the conduct of its political predecessors whose politics of exclusion led the country into decades of political instability” (Namukas & Buye, 2009:23). It can be contended, therefore, that the Zambian approach to educational decentralization relates to Lindblom's ‘incremental model’ of policy making in which the existing policy serves as the building blocks for initiating change rather than crafting a totally new policy or system from scratch under high levels of uncertainties and fluid experiences (Haddad & Demsky, 1995). Despite new fiscal measures for instance, MoE headquarters retained a great deal of authority on financial matters due to limitations and risks associated decentralisation at the local level.

This conservative approach is founded on the following assumptions: (i) “policymakers usually accept programs or policies already in place and may be more likely to support improvements of them rather than looking at something brand new and having to judge its legitimacy; (ii) No correct solution can be found, or technically derived from a diagnosis of the situation” (Haddad & Demsky, 1995:20). Furthermore, “no sweeping or drastic reforms should be attempted, (iii) but only incremental and limited policy adjustments can be

made, and (iv) policy adjustments are expected to remedy an experienced dissatisfaction with past policies, improving the existing situation or relieving an urgent problem” (Haddad & Demsky, 1995:20). Given what appears to be an elusive decentralization process Zambia went through in the past, one gets a feeling that all policy changes initiated since 2002, were merely tentative, or at best, temporary if not symbolic, but not necessarily final.

### **2.6.1 Foundation for Educational Decentralization**

The foundation for the current phase of decentralization in the Zambian education sector is BESSIP of 1999 under MoE. Guided by the National Education Policy of 1996, BESSIP served as foundation for the establishment of DEBs in 2003, whose rationale was to create synergy between central government and local communities, as far as education delivery was concerned. Further, it was through BESSIP that government outlined the operational structure, funding modalities<sup>6</sup> and guidelines on how these boards were to function in implementing the decentralization policy in the sector. These mechanisms were consolidated by the development of the MoE Strategic Plan (MoESP), which ran from 2003 to 2007.

Clearly, both BESSIP and MoESP were critical because they provided a strategic direction for the implementation of educational decentralization. If we consider the low level of success, these two programs can be said to have fallen short of meeting certain fundamentals of educational planning, which are crucial to ensure successful implementation of a policy. For example, the statements such as, “major capacity-building activities will be initiated alongside the deployment of qualified personnel to ensure successful delegation of planning, financial management and procurement responsibilities to all education boards,” (MoE, 2003: 19) implies that the policy was inconceivably ill-timed with no adequate capacity to implement it. The point here is that policy makers took a *quick-fix* kind of approach in reforming the system, without taking into account critical fundamentals of educational planning (Carnoy, 1999; Haddad & Demsky, 1995).

---

<sup>6</sup> ...funding modalities operated through a quarterly cycle of grants disbursement and accounting procedures. Grants were made based on “resource allocation criteria’ that (presumably in theory) took account of the particular needs of remote rural areas, (refer to the MoE Strategic Plan, 2003- 2007).

## **2.6.2 Educational Decentralization efforts under the FNDP**

Given the importance of education in promoting national development, the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) of 2006, reinforced the need for decentralization in the education sector by laying emphasis on the need for a multifaceted participatory approach to planning and decision-making as a way of improving education delivery, particularly at the local level (GRZ, 2008). In line with the NDP, MoE outlined measures which were aimed at strengthening educational decentralization. For example, the Provincial Education Management Committees (PEMCs) and District Education Management Committees (DEMCs) at provincial and district levels were respectively created in order to facilitate the deconcentration and devolution of educational responsibilities (GRZ, 2006).

During 2008, GRZ developed a comprehensive National Implementation Framework (NIF) which guided MoE in implementing the education component of the FNDP. In cognisance of the fact that both the FNDP and NIF were almost ending, the government constituted in 2010, a national indaba,<sup>7</sup> whose outcome provided input for the education sector component of the Sixth National Development Plan [SNDP] (MoE, 2010). Renewed impetus to refocus the educational decentralization was generated. In fact, the recent MoE Sector Devolution Plan was effectively born out of this process. Yet, however well the idea of devolving education delivery might have been conceived, it appears to be more of a fallacy going by councils' weak institutional capacity, poor financial standing and relatively low degree of autonomy.

Of particular interest is the marginal progress in implementation of the educational decentralization policy. This in any case, does not match-up with the committed efforts and resources thus far. Thorny issues such as the legal and fiscal decentralization frameworks, among others, have remained unresolved in moving towards meaningful devolution (MoE, 2010). While the government has repeatedly retained its commitment on the national decentralization process, the implementation status, particularly in the education sector, remained pretty much the same (GRZ, 2008). Presumably, it might be that it is not only the education sector environment which has stood in the way for

---

<sup>7</sup> The national indaba or consultative process was meant to review the education policy. It is hoped that this Policy Review Consultation process will deal with the most important challenges facing the Education Sector today so that the education system is targeted towards achieving higher levels aspirations for the country such as the quest to be the middle income country by 2030.

successful implementation of decentralization. The content of the policy and its related measures in themselves, the interests and abilities of those expected to implement them, including the uncoordinated efforts of stakeholders, all seem to have profound effects on implementation.

### **2.6.3 New District Governance Structure**

Decentralization comes with its dynamic forces which inevitably transform the existing system so that it is re-aligned with the objectives of deconcentrating or devolving responsibilities to lower levels (Gershberg & Winkler, 2003). This occurred in Zambia, and as expected the structure of MoE was restructured beginning from national, to provincial and down to the district level. In this section, however, only key features of the new governance structure at the district level are highlighted since it is the administrative epicentre for transforming policy into practice.

The Local Administration Act of 1980 entrusted councils with the responsibilities of administering education provision at college, school and nursery level, although, in effect, councils did very little to implement this act (Kelly, 1996). Inadequate funding, cumbersome and quite often radical inefficiencies in decision-making were some of the inherent impediments. Under the current form of educational decentralization, key institutional positions, functions and relationships at the district level have been re-designed to constitute the DEB. The DEB comprises of the ‘*Management Team Members*’ (MoE employees by virtue of the institutional line of command) and those who are appointed or co-opted, but dully appointed to ‘the board’ by the Minister of Education<sup>8</sup>. Key district personnel as shown in the Governance Manual are: (1) the District Education Board (DEB) secretary, who is accountable to the Provincial Education Officer (PEO). The DEB secretary is the head of the district education department to whom all junior officials of the management team, such as the planning, accounts and human resource officers report to. The District Education Standards Officer (DESO) second in command from the DEB secretary is the senior inspector of standards in basic schools (MoE & SNV, 2008).

---

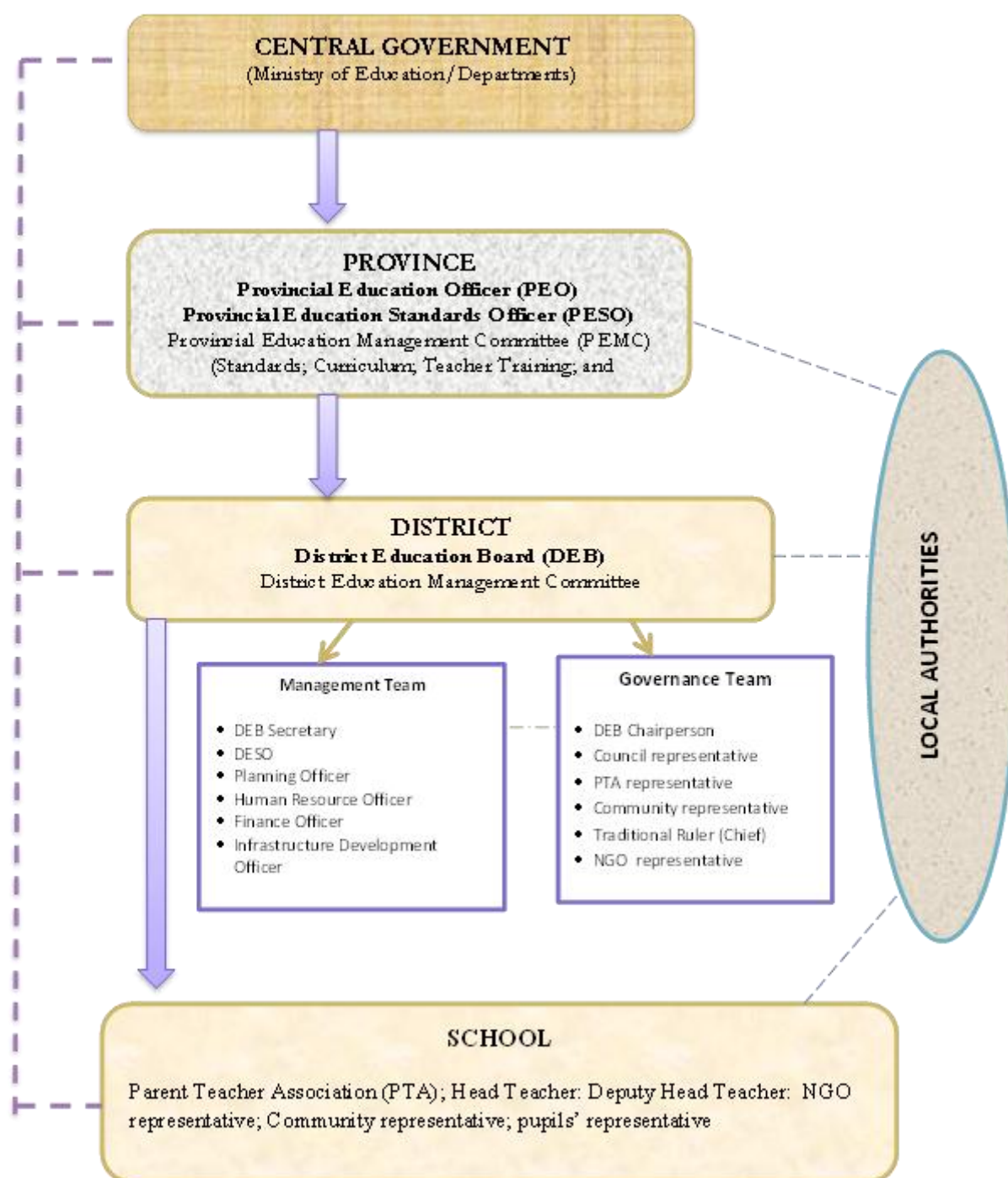
<sup>8</sup> Although the management team and the governance body are separate entities of the DEB, they are according to the policy, expected to work together in carrying out the responsibilities delegated to them by MoE at headquarters. According to the MoE policy guidelines of 2008, the dully appointed board members form the governance team whose mandate is to formulate policies of the DEB whilst the management team forms the administrative wing and are expected to carry out the day to day management functions.

On the other hand, the governance body which comprises of appointed officials from the district council, community based organizations, private sector and traditional leaders is headed by the board chair who serves as an *ex-officio* of the entire DEB. The jointly developed 2008 Handbook for planning and decision making by MoE & Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) stipulates the role of the governance body. Other than being the policy making body of the DEB, the governance body also serves as a community mouthpiece aimed at influencing management decisions within the board.

Due to inadequate funding from government, governance members are also expected to mobilize local resources towards the operations of the board. Collective action between these two teams is not only exhibited during quarterly full boards meetings but also through participatory planning and monitoring of schools. As much as the education boards' operational guidelines can be said to be clear and capacity building initiatives in certain districts undertaken, the reality seems to point to the contrary, as far as implementation of the policy is concerned. However, detailed comments on this issue are presented under the data analysis and discussion chapter.

As earlier stated, the adoption of the education decentralization policy entailed restructuring the education system in order to allow the established education boards to operate effectively and efficiently. The figure below shows the new governance structure and how DEBs are linked not only to the national level, but also actors at the school level.

**Figure 3: Governance structure showing different actors at the district level<sup>9</sup>**



**Source: Author 2011** (A construction based on information contained in: Education Board Governance Manual (MOE/SNV, 2008) and National Policy on Education (MOE, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> This governance structure shows a clear distinction between the management team members as well as the governance body. In terms of functions, the management team members are the administrative organ, while the governance team members save as the policy making body of the board. Despite their distinctive roles, both the board secretary and the chairperson are in practice support to work hand in hand in providing leadership for the board.

## 2.6.4 Fiscal Decentralization of Basic Education

Although fiscal decentralization of the education system is not the main focus in this study, it does not necessarily mean it should not be discussed at all. While not intending to dwell so much on this aspect of educational decentralization, it is important to underscore that both administrative (main focus for this study) and fiscal decentralization are like two sides of the same coin. You cannot successfully implement any one of the two without yielding significant implications on the other. For instance, in many Latin American and Caribbean countries where education administration has been decentralized (UNESCO, 2005), educational finance, although to a lesser extent, has equally been decentralized along the same administrative framework. Even in Uganda where fiscal decentralization is said to be in the lead (Namukas & Buye, 2009), administrative decentralization has also been integrated in the national policy framework. Henceforth, the notion of fiscal decentralization fits well with the hard line position for educational decentralization on account of improved efficiency, accountability and widening of resource mobilization at the lowest level.

The background to fiscal decentralization in Zambia's education sector hinges on limited financial resources at the disposal of central government, coupled with significant national imbalances in the revenue and tax regime (GRZ, 2009). Fiscal decentralization involves the devolution of financial functions to the provincial and district education offices which is consistency with the idea that "finance follows functions" (Florestal and Cooper's, 1997). This is the reason why fiscal decentralization in Zambia was integrated into the educational decentralization process.

The rationale for fiscal decentralization, which includes revenue collection, is to establish and operationalize a comprehensive local government financing system and enhance the capacity of local authorities to effectively mobilize the required resources for effective delivery of public services (GRZ, 2009). Therefore, financing mechanisms in education had to be re-worked to ensure financial autonomy at the local level, as well as to promote effective transfer of financial resources from MoE HQ to provincial, districts offices and schools. Compared to Uganda where financial decentralization education grants are calculated centrally and then released to the districts as conditional grants<sup>10</sup> (Namukas &

---

<sup>10</sup> Conditional grants are budgeted for as *capitation grants* distributed to the schools in accordance with their enrolments. Capitation grants are spent on instructional and scholastic materials, co-curricular activities, school management and

Buye, 2009), Zambia developed a national intergovernmental fiscal framework with a wide range of fiscal measures such as the "special equalization fund" and the "revenue allocation formula"<sup>11</sup> to address fiscal challenges and to guide the planning and financial management processes at all levels (GRZ, 2009). Through the NIF, funds for the implementation of decentralization initiatives (i.e. basic education provision) are disbursed monthly to DEBs through the PEO's office, based on the stated allocation criteria and formula (MoE, 2007).

Notwithstanding the significance of these fiscal measures, challenges appear at the level of operationalising them. The sheer complexity of these measures is coupled with weak institutional capacities and poor accountability arrangements. Hence, the huge allowance that has to be made for the widespread appreciation of their serious implications stand out. Perhaps another key weakness at the national level but of course, extending to DEBs owing to their high dependence on government grants, is the weak link between plans and budgets<sup>12</sup> (Saasa, Steffensen et al, 1999). This scenario has tended to cloud up implementation of educational decentralization with uncertainties which quite often result in over-blowing of risks associated with the process.

---

administration. Among conditional grants are a variety of special expenditures aimed at supporting the curriculum. The ministry sends funds for secondary school teachers' salaries through the district whereas salaries for elementary teachers are part of conditional grants that the district receives from the central government (USAID)

<sup>11</sup> The idea of these fiscal measures to ensure that available financial resources are shared equitably across sub sectors, level and programs. Two major fiscal variables namely: the *Foundation* and *Factored Amount* are used when allocating resources. Through the Foundation Amount, a fixed amount is equitably allocated to each operational level such as District Education Offices. With the Factored variable, an amount of money is allocated to sub-sectors or operational levels based on gender parity index, coverage area, pupil enrolments excetera....(Education Sector [NIF:2008-2010] MoE,2007)

<sup>12</sup> For a long time until quite recently, and more so during the pre-1991 period, Zambia's planning and budgeting systems remained largely separate and uncoordinated activities. These systems were essentially a mix of institutionalized and *ad hoc* procedures



## **Chapter 3: The Nature and Scope of Decentralization**

---

The objective of this chapter is to clear up the nature of decentralization in the context of education. The chapter is divided into three sections: The first provides a historical overview of decentralization and its dynamic trends, while the second presents the meaning and scope of decentralization. It goes further to clarify the relationship between its different but overlapping forms. The third section discusses the rationale behind decentralization reforms. It ends with an additional analysis of selected mechanisms which have a bearing on educational decentralization as it relates to this study.

### **3.1 Historical Trends**

Available literature shows that decentralization is an old phenomenon which has played a pivotal role in the development of many societies around the world. For instance, the gradual political and organizational changes that occurred in the European history (i.e. rise & fall of the Roman Empire) are a clear testimony of how decentralization shaped the developmental paths of many developed nation states in the Western world (Sharma, 2005). The drive for political self-governance on the part of certain lower level entities equally dates far back in time.

As of the early 1980s, a paradigm shift in public sector governance emerged mostly across Asia and Latin America to the extent that the understanding of the dynamics of decentralization processes and its rationale became considerably transformed. Similarly, the legitimacy of government actions has changed as has its participatory approach, especially in national and international forums. These forums largely transformed many economies and subsequently the delivery of public services (UNESCO, 2005). This background is critical for understanding decentralization as part of educational reforms. It is presumably in this context that educational policy makers in many developing countries have to contend with the challenges arising from the restructuring of education systems in trying to figure out how they should be managed, including in other countries with more or less decentralized structures. These trends are, nonetheless, in some countries such as Spain, may have been motivated by the desire to consolidate on democratization efforts and not so much about devolving functions to regional public institutions on efficiency grounds (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Perhaps such trends in Spain might have had to do

with meeting demands for political self-government in regions with historical secessionist movements, rather than administrative efficiency. This distinction had to do with ‘whose right it is to decide, as opposed to what the most efficient way of providing public services is? This distinction is an internationally common trend.

Findings from the regional survey (Rideout, 2000) indicate that many countries in SSA are either experimenting with new models of educational decentralization, or engaged in the process of planning some kind of decentralization<sup>13</sup>. In a region where most countries are desperately poor, participatory bottom-up planning is rare. The recognition of bottom-up planning by political leaders in developing countries often puts their failure to provide committed resources into spotlight. Surprisingly, they often and almost inaccurately claim credit where some level of achievement may have occurred, yet without their direct involvement (Rideout, 2000). Other scholars have argued that this tension is due to illusions about what decentralization can realistically offer in terms of narrowing the gap between educational policy and practice (Winkler & Yeo, 2007). For the past 20 years, experiences in SSA demonstrate how pervasive this decentralization is, and chances are that it is going to be just as persuasive in years to come.

## **3.2 The Concept of Decentralization**

Given the above highlights, the notion of decentralization and its different forms as they relate to this study will now be explored alongside their implications on national educational policy and implementation.

### **3.2.1 Meaning & Scope of Decentralization**

Decentralization is an ambiguous concept which is used commonly, yet defined and interpreted variously (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Some scholars have defined decentralization from a spatial perspective of transferring authority to geographically dispersed public institutions (Lauglo, 1995). From the education sector point of view, the most appealing aspect of local level financing therefore lies in the extent to which it is possible to relieve central government of its burden in financing public education. In this study decentralization is defined as, “the transfer or devolution of power to independent,

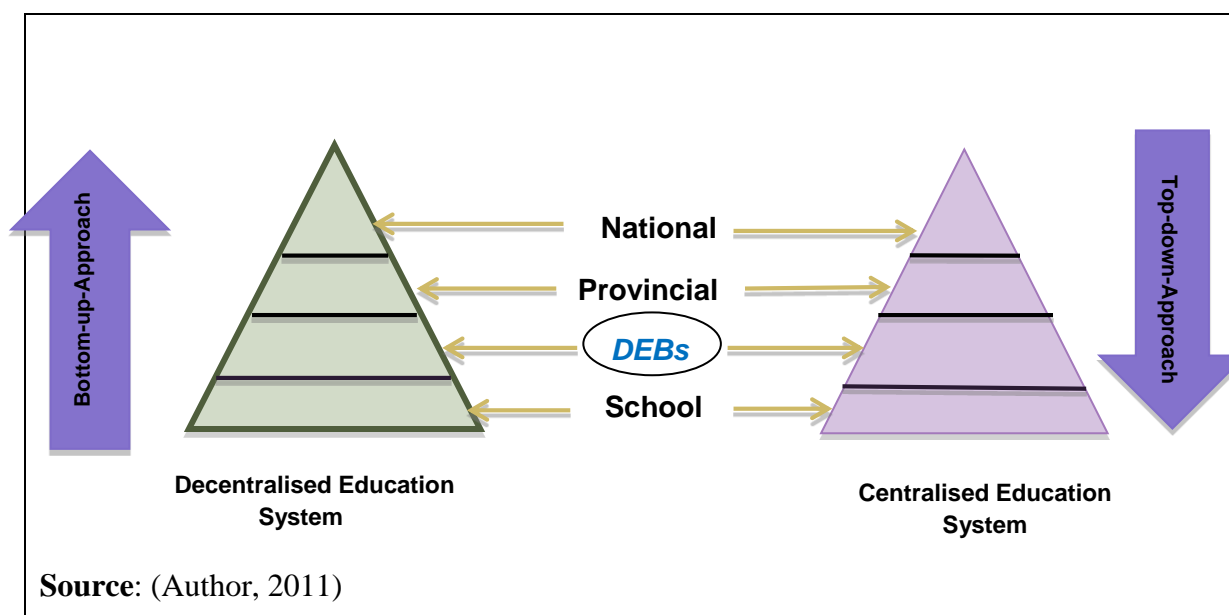
---

<sup>13</sup> The analysis of decentralization here is mainly focusing on selected Sub Saharan countries; these are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Senegal, Cameroon and Lesotho.

sub-national governments that are given the responsibilities to plan the level and quality of services to be provided, including the sources and types of funding necessary to deliver those services” (Saasa, Steffensen et al., 1999:7).

The definition by Saasa and Steffensen is narrow in scope, since devolution is not only about the transfer of authority, but encompasses other aspects not ideologically typical of decentralization. Whatever different usage of the term decentralization may be: decentralization by provision can be contrasted from decentralization of authority, for which further differentiation is unavoidable. All in all, decentralization is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomena whose meaning can be understood by distinguishing it from centralization (Bray, 1996). In any education system, such a distinction can, for example, be looked at in terms of the differences in decision making approach for education delivery - i.e. bottom up vs. top down approach.

**Figure 4: Decentralization versus Centralisation Approaches<sup>14</sup>**



The study by De Grauwe and Lugaz (2010) in West Africa indicates that educational decentralization has achieved moderate success in some countries, moderate failure in

<sup>14</sup> Figure shows two different scenarios of educational management systems. It depicts levels where decision-making power resides in a given education system. In essence, decision-making is about authority. However, a key question is whether authority should rest with top MoE officials at national level (centralised), or whether it should be delegated further down the hierarchy, away from the centre (decentralised). Arguably, the choice between centralised or decentralised in a given country is not an either/or choice. It all depends on the context. The model of centralisation which may work in one country may not in the other and that applies to educational decentralisation.

others, and a striking combination of both in many other countries. Reasons for these different success rates seem to be poorly understood, if not overly stressed and, in certain cases, not backed by conclusive evidence. Since the workings of decentralization remain largely a mystery, one finds it hard to evaluate whether or not specific decentralization programs succeed or fail due to strengths or weakness in design or implementation, and more difficult still to recommend improvements. The point here is that decentralization as a phenomenon is diverse and one can even differentiate the concept into different forms, for which the conditions for success or failure are context dependent.

Generally the lessons learned, particularly in SSA, suggest that decentralization can be successful if the central government is politically stable, solvent, and above all, committed to transferring clear responsibilities matched with sufficient financial resources when local authorities are not able but willing to assume those responsibilities. It can also be successful where there are well organized and vibrant civil society organizations and last but not the least where there are mechanisms for promoting effective community involvement (Naidoo, 2002; Rondenelli & Cheema, 1983). However, these scholars may not be an all wise oracle in all respects, since there can be exceptions to that too. Decentralization, in the form of initiatives and efforts from below, may occur not only when government is non-effective, but also when government is not committed to service provision. For instance, community schools in rural parts of Zambia began way before decentralization was adopted in 2002, simply because government did not have enough resources to build classrooms where they never existed but were badly needed.

### **3.2.2 Forms of Decentralization**

Since inception, the notion of decentralization has increasingly evolved with on-going disagreements and debates regarding its different forms. Decentralization is a “multifaceted concept<sup>15</sup>”, and its different forms should therefore be distinguished as having different characteristics, policy implications and success conditions (Karlsen, 2000). In theory, the different forms of decentralization differ, depending on what sort of values are of significance. Rather than dwelling on the meaning of decentralization,

---

<sup>15</sup> The term “decentralization” embraces a variety of terminologies which needs to be carefully analyzed in any given setting before determining whether program interventions should focus on reorganization of financial, administrative, or service delivery mechanisms. Types of decentralization include political, administrative, fiscal, and market decentralization. Drawing distinctions between these various concepts is useful for highlighting the many dimensions to successful decentralization and the need for coordination among them.

emphasis should be placed on how its forms relate to each other and the significance of their differences in service delivery. Using Rondinelli & Cheema's typology of 1983, the three main degrees of authority, often categorized as deconcentration, delegation and devolution, will be discussed.

#### **3.2.2.1 Deconcentration**

Deconcentration is the process through which a central authority establishes field units which are staffed with its own officers. According to Namukas & Buye (2009), deconcentration is regarded as the weakest form of decentralization. It is considered the weakest because the central governments merely shift responsibilities to officials at the regional, provincial, district and local level without addressing issues of administrative and technical capacities. The measures are critical in ensuring effective service delivery. It is for this reason that some education experts from the center tend to disfavor deconcentration, on grounds that it is unlikely to lead to potential benefits in education because authority is hardly transferred to sub national structures (Bray & Mukundan, 2004). Perhaps Bray and Mukundani are too negative about deconcentration as their assertions paint a poor picture about it. The fact, however, is that deconcentration can be equally beneficial for centralized state bureaucracies, provided that certain issues are left to be decided upon by officials closer to the ground than those sitting in MoE headquarters.

#### **3.2.2.2 Delegation**

Compared to deconcentration, where authority is more limited to the top, delegation can be seen as a wider form of decentralization. Nevertheless, delegation can apply in everyday life to all kinds of easily revocable transfer, of authority to positions or persons who remain accountable to whoever has the authority to delegate. However, it is not entirely about formal or informal organizational functioning. Through delegation, central governments transfer responsibilities and authority for decision-making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous institutions not wholly controlled by central government, but ultimately accountable to it (Florestal & Cooper, 1997). The Examination Council of Zambia, which independently coordinates all national examinations on behalf of the MoE, is one such an example. According to Hanson (1997), a key feature of delegation is the idea that authority transferred to lower hierarchical structures can be withdrawn at the

discretion of the delegating unit. The problem, however, is that the established usage of this concept is much wider than what Florestal, Cooper and Hanson have in mind. Arguably, delegation can succeed where precise instructions and clear procedures are given on how responsibilities should be executed. Often, however, this is not the case, particularly among modern decentralization advocates in developing countries such as Zambia or Malawi.

### **3.2.2.3 Devolution**

Devolution can be understood as the distribution of authority to local governments or communities to enable them make decisions and take actions independently from central government. As opposed to deconcentration and delegation, devolution enables local government institutions to operate without government interference in dealing with matters such as personnel management and utilization of allocated funding (Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983). On the other hand, local authorities in a devolved system have clearly and legally recognized geographical spheres, over which they exercise their power and authority, and within which they deliver public services. It has also been reiterated that, because of the nature of the administrative and legal setup in a devolved system, units do not often seek for permission from central government when making decisions regarding public service provision (Hanson, 1997 & 1998).

Although devolution can be perceived as the best form of decentralization (Florestal & Cooper, 1997), it is not risk free since problems such as arbitrary abuse of power and authority can be detrimental to equitable service delivery at the local level. The question therefore is: Are there no such risks regardless of whether authority is concentrated or decentralized? This question is hard to answer, but one possible answer might be that this problematic issue is strongly influenced by country specific ideologies about the political rationale for decentralization, but again, this raises another critical question. Who should have the right to make decisions, regardless of whether such decisions are right or wrong? No straight jacket approach applies, here but probably the best option lies in striking a tricotomy balance between or among these three forms, but also taking into account challenges that are associated with each one of them.

### **3.3 Why Educational Decentralization?**

In order to fully understand the rationale and scope of decentralization in education, one needs to examine not only the arguments for decentralization, but also factors behind it and how these play a role in education. As much as educational decentralization might be regarded as a fashionable reform adopted by many countries with different characteristics, some proponents are skeptical about the motives for decentralization (Naidoo & Kong, 2003). Such skepticisms are based on what appears to be “unrealistic beliefs” about decentralization reforms. Considering the complexities of decentralization, it is clear that different actors of decentralization reforms in education may be driven by a mix of motives and actions. For example, the Ministry of Finance as the chief financier may reason differently from MoE on devolved fiscal issues. But then, how do we know the real motives of their actions? Besides, whether or not these actors know the real motives is a different matter altogether.

In education, for example, there are sometimes doubts about whether the publicly declared rationale for decentralization reflects the real motives behind the decision to decentralize. Questions can be asked; were the real motives about the desire to improve learning achievement, or was the motive the need to share the financial burden? Does educational decentralization not increase disparities among localities as well as workloads for officials at the district level and in the schools? Does political expediency inspire the need to redistribute authority more widely to local level education actors or defend the status quo? These questions are merely hypothetical and not based on empirical evidence of a specific case. Neither is this study trying to answer them other than using them as a basis for analytical reflection on the motives behind educational decentralization. Rather than focusing on questionable assumptions or ideological motives about educational decentralization, the key message is that practical implementation realities differ across contexts as such one has to have these questions at the back of the mind, even though the study may not necessarily be about answering them.

#### **3.3.1 Arguments for Educational Decentralization**

Underlying different rationale for educational decentralization are various arguments which prominently feature in policy debates as to how best planning and governance

systems can be reformed. For instance, where government is top heavy and faces difficulties in tackling problems of pupil retention or teacher deployment, then educational decentralization may be an option. Decentralization may also be an option where citizens demand to have their voices heard in decisions which directly affect them. It may also be an option, “where broadening the base for resource mobilization is the objective, and when it becomes imperative to clarify lines of accountability” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999:9).

The discussion by McGinn & Welsh is based on other typologies, in which the rationale of decentralization has been categorized in three different ways: (i) “the redistribution rationale, which justifies power sharing, (ii) the efficiency rationale which has got to do with improving cost-effectiveness and, (iii) the culture of learning rationale which emphasizes on the need to decentralize educational curriculum” (Weiler, 1990, 434- 441). Despite theoretical differences among them, these arguments are interlinked at least at the level of policy rhetoric (Hanson, 1997; Rondinelli, 1999).

### **3.3.1.1 Power Sharing Rationale**

Proponents of the Power Sharing Argument argue that decentralization enhances effective exercise of authority and decision making regarding the allocation of human resource, material and financial (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). While they appreciate centralization on grounds that it enhances equity in the distribution of resources, they are quick in attacking its rationale on the basis of its deeply rooted bureaucratic bottlenecks which, in the case of education, negatively affect the delivery of services. While others disagree that centralization may not serve equity, it has done this in other countries since doing so depends on the priorities set, which ultimately reflects on who controls the government.

However, this rationale can be difficult to substantiate, especially if one reflects on the mixed results which are evident both in highly centralized and decentralized education systems across the globe. West African countries with strongly centralized systems have historically spent nearly as much on tertiary education for the very few as they did on primary schooling for the majority (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2010). France and Malaysia are also good examples where the needs and financial resources of the education systems are controlled and regulated by the state, yet with positive results (Weiler, 1990). On the other hand, experience on the “democratic wish” reform in the United States shows that, “decentralization tends to make public schooling a preserve of few and quite often corrupt



local constituencies become less concerned about the overall improvement of education but focus more on serving their own interests” (Elmore 1983:38). These experiences on the Power Sharing Argument entirely depend on the eyes that see it.

### **3.3.1.2 Efficiency Based Rationale**

Advocates of the efficiency rationale present a strong view that introducing decentralized structures of governance leads to improved efficiencies of the management and in equitable delivery of education services (Winkler, 1994). Besides, multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and UNDP claim that besides cost reduction, greater decentralization leads to the mobilization of resources which otherwise might not be generated under centralization. As usual, various reasons are put across to explain why educational costs under centralized administrative structures are perceived as high, and why educational decentralization initiatives are seen as more economically robust. For instance, there is an assumption that decision-making in an education system where micro educational issues are handled by geographically and culturally distant bureaucrats at the center, leads to high costs. Another angle to this argument is that where countrywide educational standards are implemented by central government, cost-saving measures on educational inputs related to regional or local price differences are usually unattainable (Winkler & Yeo, 2007).

However, these arguments are as much contentious as they are debatable. Contrary to high profile assertions by the World Bank and UNDP, decentralization does not always or automatically lead to increased efficiency. As a matter of fact, the absence of knowledge about the level of aggregation on how available resources can be allocated and more efficiently utilized in the education sector can render efforts for decentralization futile (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Quite often, policy rhetoric tends to overshadow what otherwise might be sound financial decentralization measures. As observed by Elmore (1983), the replication in New York of educational organization by the model of “community districts”, for example, proved an extremely inefficient decentralization initiative due to political control which according to Elmore made schools in New York, and indeed in other big states, vulnerable to corrupt local politics and political patronage.

Effectiveness is also critical in educational decentralization since like efficiency, the two are like two sides of the same coin. Research evidence from Argentina, Mexico, and

Venezuela, suggests that decentralization enhances effectiveness which consequently promotes accountability and transparency at district and school levels (UNESCO, 2005). Some scholars have argued that management and accountability of schools can be improved if school managers are made more locally accountable (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Since accountability can influence effectiveness, the question of whom to be accountable to needs to be thoroughly pondered, particularly in settings where accountability mechanisms are weak or nonexistent. But the usage of the term accountability in the devolved education system is controversial because of ambiguities in a statement such as, “schools are to be accountable to the public for the results they produce with students”. According to Elmore (1983), such statements are a portrayal of surface and sometimes misleading meaning of commonly used phrases about decentralization which have nothing to do with effectiveness as such.

### **3.3.1.3 Culture and Learning Rationale**

The culture and learning argument for decentralization is centered on the teaching and learning process of a given education system. Those in support of decentralization along this line of thought are of the view that, “decentralization enhances the responsiveness and sensitivity of education to differences and local needs” (Weiler, 1990:47). The thrust of this argument in education is that regions and communities have different cultural and economic characteristics which influence their respective pedagogical needs. It is no wonder, the universal application of education standards under centralization have been denounced since such a policy results in discrepancies between curricula and learning needs (Weiler, 1990).

However, this rationale is only valid to the extent that the outcomes of contextually and diversely applied curriculum or learning processes generate knowledge and skills narrowly relevant to specify localities. Such processes and outcomes may not, however, be applicable at the international level where the use of global languages such as English is an increasingly more popular medium of instruction and learning. The other side to this although, is that rather than closing educational decentralization in a globalizing world, it should open a window of opportunity for learning new culture and professional development that transcends cultural barriers and national boundaries.

### **3.4 Other Mechanisms for Educational Decentralization**

Beyond the arguments discussed above, there are other known mechanisms which are equally in favour of educational decentralization. These include School Based Management (SBM) and market efficiency.

#### **3.4.1 The Rationale for SBM**

In an effort to improve financing and delivery of education services, many governments have increasingly been decentralizing decision-making authority by way of increasing parental and community involvement in running schools—a strategy popularly known as School Based Management (SBM). It has been noted that where the SBM approach is adopted, authority is often devolved from central government to the school level (Haug, 2009; Hanson, 1990). From a conceptual perspective, SBM transforms the governance structure in which individual schools become the focal points for the decision-making processes, through which improvements at the school level can be stimulated and sustained. The general view underlying SBM is that decentralizing decision making authority to parents and communities fosters demands and ensues that schools provide social and economic benefits that adequately reflect the needs and values of such localities (Haug, 2009; World Bank, 2008).

However, whether or not SMB can offer greater possibilities for improving teaching and learning, the central government's role toward education provision cannot be totally done away with. According to Abu-Duhow (1999), there are diverse typologies of SBM whose differences depend on the degree of autonomy and decision making powers within a given decentralized education system, thus rendering almost each SBM model unique. The 2004 World Development Report presents a framework which defines four distinct accountability mechanisms for analyzing the provision of education services through SBM. These mechanisms are; voice, compact management and client power (see Box 2).

## Box 2: Concepts for Analysis of Education Provision through School Based Management (SBM)

**Voice** – how well citizens can hold politicians and policymakers accountable for their performance in discharging their responsibility for providing education.

**Compact** – how well and how clearly the responsibilities and objectives of public education policy are communicated.

**Management** – the actions that create effective frontline providers within organizations.

**Client power** – how well citizens, as clients, can increase the accountability of schools and school systems.

**Source:** (Di Grapello, 2004)

Note that there are complex relationships between and among actors which determine the effectiveness of SBM in any setting. Furthermore, the diverse environments under which SBM emerges equally widen the degree of heterogeneity between schools in many countries (De Grauwe, 2005). Yet, overwhelming evidence seems to suggest that failure or success of a given SMB model can either be influenced by what is referred to as “long route” or “short route” accountability mechanisms both of which prove to be challenging when it comes to improving education service delivery at school level<sup>16</sup> (World Bank, 2007). Going by this analysis, one can argue that there are limits to the level of success SBM can achieve under administrative decentralization because there is no justification whatsoever to imagine that devolving educational system by itself can lead to either efficiency or effectiveness in teaching and learning in schools.

### 3.4.2 Market Efficiency

Education provision is a complex endeavor as such educational decentralization allows for various approaches such as market efficiency to come into play. Today, in the declining

---

<sup>16</sup> Quite often school level improvements on the “long route” dimension can prove too long and highly unattainable process. “Short route” accountability mechanisms under such circumstances seem to offer realistic possibilities in that beneficiaries have an opportunity to hold to education service providers accountable. Thus voice and monitoring mechanisms help to tease-out improvements in service provision particularly in a scenario where long route school based improvements prove somewhat futile.

years of centralized planning, great promise and reliance are placed on the role of the market to release creative energies while minimizing inefficiencies (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). The politics of market forces (privatization) in education underline the notion of “school choice” which has increased competition between schools (Myron, 1989). The argument behind such competition is to improve efficiency and quality of education, but also to ensure that educational needs and demands of parents are effectively met. Some scholars have claimed that:

“Pupils and parents are the majority group of consumers, say market efficiency proponents. Parents pay for the education of their children ...hence they have a stake in the education on how their children should be educated since they know better their abilities and interests as opposed to teachers and other education actors who are distracted by excessive demands of how education should be provided” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999:43).

This position is accepted by several others. Lauglo (1995), for instance, highlighted the implications of competition on education provision. He noted that those who support market mechanisms perceive that good quality and efficient use of educational resources are best attained in an environment where competition thrives. On the other hand, the market is claimed to be the best option in terms of publicity on what kind of education services (public or private) clients need and what satisfies them (Hanson, 1997). On the basis of the available providers, parents are at liberty to decide where to take their children in order to get maximum value for their money or investment.

The principal assumption regarding the argument about market efficiency in the context of educational decentralization is that pupils and their parents are well placed to determine the value of educational services provided, and it is incumbent upon them to exercise their freedom of choice among competing schools in a given locality (Haug, 2009). Haug took note of the fact that market mechanisms influence schools to operate as if they are business entities by providing their services competitively. In essence, competition makes schools work harder to do well with the students they get. The arguments raised here are nonetheless problematic. What if government schools are of the same quality across the country, be it high or low, while those in the private sector follow the national curriculum and teaching system with the same teachers or are equally handled by incompetent teachers as those in public schools? Can competition still be pronounced if parents are not adequately informed on how to make rational choices amidst a wide range of quality teaching and learning? Arguably not, but then competition is not just about public vs.

private ownership because it is possible to have competition among publicly owned schools too. Besides, if public schools not exposed to competition, they may most likely make less of an effort than private, or indeed, state schools that compete.

There is arguably no market where the available schools fetch prohibitively high fees to pupils who are located far away (Myron, 1989; McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Whether or not actual competition or actual free choice of school is beneficial for all is also a contentious issue. Studies in the UK and New Zealand provide evidence suggesting that competition has not led to or will not result into social justice in education (Hanson, 1997). In fact, it only serves to perpetuate educational and social inequalities in society although this is context dependent given as well that private is not always for the rich but may serve the poor too, depending on cost to parents and available social privileges from the government. One can liken the efficiency rationale in a devolved education system as a game which produces winners. To the extent that education becomes a “zero-sum game” of unintended consequences in which for every winner, there must be a loser. In such instances, the across-the-board public education improvements fought for across decades, or the popular EFA goals, become a pipedream.

In all this what can be the role of government? Despite the shrinking political space, the government still has a major role to play toward education provision. When market complexities are put aside, the government’s role cannot be limited to policy formulation alone. It may be acceptable therefore, for the government to engage either in a limited way or in policy implementation and monitoring of activities as well. Evidence shows that while policy makers advocate for market efficiency, they backtrack because of the necessity to control national examination to make sure that the centrally determined educational norms are achieved (Hannaway & Carnoy, 1993).

On the other hand, as much as it is acceptable for parents to work for the good of their school children, it is also not a bad idea for them to select best schools for them. There is absolutely no obstacle in doing so and as a matter of fact, this is the case in many countries. Governments have the responsibility to ensure that every child has access to quality education. However, there are unfortunate tendencies regarding the abrogation of this responsibility in certain countries under the guise that market efficiency mechanisms will fix things up (Belfield & Livin, 2000).

## Chapter 4: Literature Review

---

“Decentralization is a word that has been used by different people to mean a good many different things. But what do we see in practice? Experiments with local government that end in chaos and bankruptcy; ‘decentralized’ structures of administration that only act as a more effective tool for centralizing power; regional and district committees in which government officials make decisions while the local representatives sit silent; village councils where local people participate but have no resources to allocate”....(Mawhood,1993:9)

Indeed, decentralization is a concept that cannot be easily understood based on its explicit assumptions but as many commentators have observed, it is generally orientation that signifies the distribution of state functions and authority from the center to the local level agencies (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2010). However, the difficulty in understanding decentralization is visible in many ways. For instance, literature based on certain research findings is quite often marred with inconsistencies attributed to flaws in methodological designs and data analysis processes among other aspects.

This chapter is, therefore, devoted towards discussing the literature review. It begins with a synthesis of policy gaps between decentralization policy and practice. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the literature on educational decentralization experiences from selected international and regional settings. Emphasis is placed on examining how institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy play out as key factors. The chapter concludes with comments on the relevancy of the literature reviewed to the study.

Guided by the statement of the problem and research questions, it can be argued here that accountability, institutional capacity and local autonomy are critical factors if devolved powers are to effectively serve educational needs of the local people. This argument is linked to the assumption that the establishment of DEBs in Zambia can lead to improvements in the management and delivery of basic education services at the local level (MoE, 1996). Some researchers claim that policy intents on decentralization do not always, for whatever reasons, reflect actual objectives for implementation (Naidoo, 2002). Naidoo’s assertion seems to provide sufficient grounds for one to be skeptical as to whether or not the Zambian model of educational decentralization can yield expected results going by the current level of capacity, accountability and the autonomy of DEBs

## **4.1 Decentralization: Confusing Benefits?**

It seems easy to theoretically conceive the benefits of decentralization, but national level experiences, particularly in developing countries, suggest that such benefits cannot be achieved in a “quick fix” approach. The Zambian case also shows how hard it can be to pin-point its meaningful policy outcomes. Given this ambivalence, why then does decentralization continue to be perceived as key policy reform in education?

Theoretically, educational decentralization promises many benefits, such as, increased effectiveness and efficiency in the management of education, reduction in the administrative burden at the top, delineating the lines of accountability and above all the broadening of the base for resource mobilization (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Others consider equity as a key rationale, but since educational decentralization makes localities more dependent on their local resources, it means that certain aspects of equity could suffer in the absence of adequate compensatory mechanisms (Gershberg & Winkler, 2003). Even in countries such as Brazil and Columbia where positive aspects of educational decentralization have been recorded, deep-seated regional inequalities in sharing of resources and tension in the distribution of functions between the state and provinces or districts still render expected benefits a pipedream (McGinn & Welsh, 1999:20-54).

Looking at the SSA region, save perhaps for Uganda where there has been some reasonable level of progress towards improved governance and accountability system, the implementation of educational decentralization generally represents a blurred or hybrid of efforts. Such effort varies from delegation of functions to mere devolution of power devoid of appropriate institutional capacities and accountability measures to support good implementation (Saito, 2001; Naidoo, 2002; Mukandala, 1998). Indeed, when it comes to educational decentralization policy and that practice, it could be true that:

“There is no silver bullet with decentralization: what is equitable may not be efficient, what is efficient may not be democratic, what is democratic may not be equitable. In practice, reform policies must attempt to optimize the sometimes inevitable trade-offs between efficiency, equity, and democracy while seeking to improve on all three...The actual design and implementation of decentralization reforms are inherently political processes; hence, the decisions about making these trade-offs rightly occur in the political arena” (Gershberg & Winkler, 2003:1).



## **4.2 International Experiences on Education Decentralization**

The debate whether educational decentralization is good or bad is counterproductive and a waste of time (Litvack et al., 1998). It is essential, however, to analyze a wide range of factors which influence success and those which account for failures in implementation. From an international perspective, there are certain countries where education decentralization has yielded good and sustainable results, while in others, not so much good progress is there to talk about. Below is an analysis of international experiences from three selected countries, namely Brazil, New Zealand and Norway. Attention here is on institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy since these are the factors which are central in this thesis.

### **4.2.1 Educational Decentralization in Brazil**

Educational decentralization efforts in Brazil can be traced as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the country went through constitutional changes that established a federal system of the government many are familiar with today. The decentralization reforms of the 1930s led to the transfer of power and responsibilities for basic education to federal units in order to improve efficiency and participation (UNESCO, 2005). Besides transforming the active role of the federal government in matters pertaining to operations of schools in all the federal units, the legal provisions of 1996 also gave impetus for school autonomy in which school officials could spend transferred funds nearly at their own discretion.

In the state of Sao Paulo, for example, the process of increasing school autonomy included the transfer of institutional policy decisions to local schools as a way of enhancing accountability and wider stakeholder participation (Maideira, 2007). As much as this process might have been broader in scope by encompassing pedagogic, administrative and financial aspects of decentralization, it was engraved with contradictory practices of centralization planning at the federal level, and to a lesser extent at the state and municipal level (Derqui, 2010). While the use of funds was decentralized, bureaucratic barriers, inequalities in resource distribution and lack of financial capacity at the local level remained a major challenge.

Based on the aforementioned, a question can be asked: Does school autonomy guarantee success towards improved efficiency? Decentralization reforms in Brazil certainly need not be seen as a smooth political transformation. In fact, it was largely a political process influenced by various factors. For instance, the financial crisis of the 1970s and 80s did not only trigger the need for reduction in public expenditure but also necessitated the need for broadening the resource base, which is one of the objectives for decentralization (Derqui, 2010). It seems that educational decentralization in Brazil laid much emphasis on financial matters as opposed to improving the quality of education. Compared to Argentina where the objective of decentralization was to improve efficiency and quality of education, Brazil focused more on addressing issues of democratic participation by creating school councils. However, “this initiative proved inept due to lack of active participation and authoritarian tendencies, although the current process of school deconcentration is believed to be improving the situation” (Derqui, 2010:57).

Coming back to the question of efficiency, one can argue that school autonomy is a vague concept and whether or not it leads to greater efficiency, is merely an argument which is dependent on the prevailing factors such as school leadership capacity. It has been argued that, “although school autonomy has potential rewards, its far-reaching implications might be undesirable in certain contexts” (Dillon, 2011:7). Further, there is also evidence suggesting that increased school autonomy does not necessarily lead to greater efficiency nor does it always go hand in hand with increased responsibilities (Mcnerney, 2003). Given these assertions, the benefits of educational decentralization in Brazil may be said to have been attractive. But as can be deduced from box below, it is hard to figure out precisely what has been the actual degree of autonomy, level of participation and the impact of decentralization at the school level. Apparently, educational decentralization, albeit posing challenges, will continue to be at the center of educational reforms in that country for years to come.

### Box 3: Lessons on Educational Decentralization Leaned from Brazil

#### Legal Framework of Educational Decentralization

1891 Constitution: Federal system and administrative decentralization. Continuity with the military dictatorship of 1964 1980-1995. Promulgation of the Federal Constitution (1988) 1995-2002. Amendment of the Constitution (n° 14/96) and directives and Bases for Education Act

#### Goal and Expected Results

Greater Autonym, accountability, responsibilities and efficiency in education delivery. The Union has a normative and redistributive function. Technical and financial assistance to States and municipalities. A minimum of 18 percent of the Union's revenue and 25% of that of the federated entities must be devoted to education. Educational programmes are decentralized. Reduction of regional inequalities (access to resources and enrolment). Strengthening of democratic participation in school management and establishment of a fund to upgrade the teaching profession (definition of an average salary).

#### Major Experiences

Disparities persist between regions and between social groups. Need for clear accountability and stronger institutional mechanisms and also clear criteria for financial cooperation between the federated entities. Many of the municipalities do not have sufficient revenue to assume new responsibilities, and as such, it needs to be supplemented. 50% of children in fourth grade cannot read or carry out basic mathematical operations Resources have been assigned to basic education, to the detriment of other levels of education.

Source: UNESCO: 2005: 52

### 4.2.2 Experiences from New Zealand

The objective for reviewing the New Zealand model of decentralization is to explore the accountability mechanisms and their implications for education delivery. Historically, education provision in New Zealand has been characterized by spells of stagnation during which the administrative system was highly centralized, such that around the 1960s, community demands for improving the system began to increase (LaRocque & Boyer, 1997). Further discontents in the neglected communities around the 1980s necessitated the restructuring of the education system. Local government institutions in New Zealand had in the past played an insignificant role in public service provision. However, the sweeping decentralization reforms of the late 1980s demonstrate that while educational decentralization can be a gradual political reform, it can also be completed quickly, as was the case in New Zealand even though desired results pertaining to local control and accountability remained somewhat elusive than earlier envisioned (World Bank, 1997).

In order to appreciate the experiences in New Zealand, one has to pay attention to the “tomorrow’s school” reforms of 1988 which were an outcome of wider public consultations by the “picot committee”, which examined how best the education system

was to be administered under a more decentralized system<sup>17</sup> (Jacobs, 1997; LaRocque & Boyer, 1997). This committee recommended among other things, “a system that was more accountable and efficient and one that was as much as possible based on an equitable and fair distribution of available resources” (Jacobs, 1997:340).

According to LaRocque & Boyer (1997), the tomorrow’s schools and subsequent reforms led to self-managing schools which resulted from the creation of a competitive platform and elimination of the substantial degree of education bureaucracy. This environment enabled the communities to have a say on how well schools had to be run based on schools freedom and autonomy for addressing local needs.<sup>18</sup> These measures were backed by a new set of accountability initiatives which included the establishment of charter schools and an independent body for reporting purposes. Understandably, these initiatives were by no means perfectly designed or flawlessly implemented, but research evidence through all these years suggests that New Zealand’s urban middle class families have always sought and have been in many instances successful in finding ways to educate their children in socially advantaged schools having, based on the policy done so in different ways<sup>19</sup>. The Study by Jacobs (1997) revealed significant demands for educational choices – particularly among students from low-income families previously underserved by the centralized education system.

The key factors underlying these experiences lie on the vexing link between ‘*accountability*’ and ‘*local control*’ on the one hand and ‘*self-managing schools*’ and accountability on the other. Indeed, effective accountability can lead to improved efficiency in terms of enrolment granted that all enabling factors for local control or self-managing schools are in place (LaRocque & Boyer, 1997). But in the absence of adequate capacities, no educational institutions or actors can achieve this. It is no wonder Astle, Bryants and Hotham (2011) emphasized that;

“Education is too important to be delivered without scrutiny. Yet we have, in our determination to measure school efficiency and effectiveness and drive for school improvement, allowed the accountability ‘tail’ to wag the education ‘dog’; our

---

<sup>17</sup> Educational reforms in New Zealand seem to have begun in 1988 as a result of sound political and education leadership that carefully developed abroad based consensus at every stage of the decentralization process. As a matter of fact, the highly publicized MoE document entitled “tomorrow schools” helped to popularize the major campaign through which the majority of the New Zealanders provided their views.

<sup>18</sup> This system is in fact; still in operation to date such that all state and state- integrated schools are administered by elected board of trustees composed of parents and community volunteers under what is known as the ‘Bulk Grant’ funding modalities.

<sup>19</sup> For further details, see online article on the study: <http://usj.sagepub.com/content/44/7/1393.refs.html>

high stakes system of consequential accountability now dominates almost every aspect of state-funded education, with hugely damaging consequences” (p.4).

Clearly, we can learn a lot from decentralization reforms in New Zealand. The deep concern however, is that it can be a mistake to assume that increasing community ownership, or scaling up school autonomy for that matter, makes obvious the need for effective accountability system. If anything, the challenge of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of different schools exponentially grows as school autonomy or local control increase. In a decentralized system such as that of New Zealand, information needs to increasingly flow up and down between parents and government to ensure effective local control and to put pressure on schools where accountability is weak or non-existent.

#### **4.2.3 Educational Decentralization in Norway**

The Norwegian model of decentralization provides an interesting empirical case for literature review due to the profound achievements which have been attained over what one may call, “decades of sound educational policy reforms”. My focus was to analyse how local [school] autonomy and accountability played out as success factors. Historically, education provision in Norway can be said to have been administered from the center under strong ‘democratic and egalitarian values’<sup>20</sup>, with the exception of certain curricular issues that were locally decided over (Smehaugen, 2007). According to Kalsen (2000), the arguments in favour of decentralization in Norway emerged in the late 1960s and went on to be popularized towards the late 1970s. He stated that, “the educational decentralization process in Norway went on beyond the 1980s up until 1990s adding however, that the rationale for decentralization and how it was to be implemented in education remained under vigorous investigations” (p.1).

The available evidence indicates that educational decentralization reforms in Norway were initially introduced at the national level, although there are indications that the reforms might have encountered some sort of passivity and political resistance at the local level (Kalsen, 2000). Using this experience one can argue that educational decentralization

---

<sup>20</sup> The history of education in Norway originates from continuous tension between “geo-political and cultural peripheries and the center”, with gradual power concentration at the center. Over decades, educational ownership, leadership and control shifted from strong local control and self-definition to a fully centralized state system under the Education Act of the 1970s. In principle, education in Norway is regarded as profound human rights issue and the country is seen as one of the first to introduce universal participation in a unified education system.

reforms initiated from the center can under ideal circumstances, succeed in order to sustain national level legitimacy which, in a way, consolidates on political power at national level. This might be the reason why educational decentralization reforms in certain countries including Norway have tended to generate a new set of centrally administered regulatory laws.

In the context of educational decentralization, local autonomy, accountability and institutional capacity can be said to be key principles which have influenced the delivery of education in Norway (Helgøy & Homme, 2007). Nonetheless, two recent decentralization reforms have significantly shaped the way education is currently funded and delivered at the local level. Having been initiated from the top, the new Local Governing Act gives increased local flexibility and authority to municipalities and schools. Under the new funding system, popularly known as the “lump-sum system”, the government provides funding to municipalities to cover administrative costs for schools, but it is the school Principal who is responsible for executing the budget (Kalsen, 2000). Despite being widely supported in Parliament, these reforms still encounter resistance at the local level. For instance, critics of the “lump sum system” argue that this initiative tends to create disparities among schools, thus weakening the principle of equality of educational opportunity – a principle which has been a force in driving the Norwegian educational policy (Helgøy & Homme, 2007).

Arguably, Norway represents what might be regarded by many as a successful model of educational decentralization, but the study by Smehaugen (2007) shows that its implementation varies across decentralized units across the country. Further, Smehaugen’s study revealed (across all sampled schools) that the Principal has the right to initiate decisions on a wide range of issues subject to the agreement from the participatory councilors at the school but in cases of disagreements, he can nonetheless, make decisions that are contrary to teachers and parents’ views (Smehaugen, 2007:67). Obviously it is at this point where effective accountability is compromised. The question then is; can accountability and local (school) autonomy be enhanced in the absence of the right to negotiate within the teachers and parents’ representative body? If this is working in Norway, one can argue that such bodies at least provide a platform for discontents which, if not checked, can be a recipe for bad governance.

**Figure 5: Experiences of Educational Decentralization Reforms in Norway at Elementary School Level.**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A Case from a Rural Municipality in a Mountain Area</b></p> <p>This municipality has been economically weakened after the increased administrative and economic co-ordination between various sectors was introduced to the municipalities in 1993. The small neighbourhood schools (grendeskoler) with the exception of one have been closed down in this municipality. However, the relationship between the municipality and the case school has until present followed a somewhat traditional model, with no specific accreditation to the school. Appointment of teachers and decision on teacher salaries are maintained at the municipality level. The principals report to the municipality chief education officer. Accumulated finances are made available to the schools, based on schools' documentation of number of classes and special education needs. The relative number of teaching hours is under the pressure of cost cutting.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elementary School (Grades 1-7)</b></p> <p><b>Budget:</b></p> <p>The principal presents a budget proposal to the liaison committee (which is a counselling body). It is also presented to the elected representatives of the teacher organizations, who then discuss the proposal with all the members. The representatives take part in discussions in the representative board. The principal makes the final decision on the budget.</p> <p><b>Contents of Teaching/Learning:</b></p> <p>The school arranges staff meetings in order to discuss areas and contents of innovative and development work. It is in this forum that teachers enjoy the greatest informal – but real – influence. Furthermore, each team of teachers, organized for each class level, has autonomy to decide on matters concerning methods, co-ordination of projects, etc. in areas which are not regulated by the binding framework (L97); development work initiated by the ministry (mathematics, reading/writing and information technology), or regional or intra-municipality projects coordinated by the municipality chief education officers (e.g. to strengthen pupils' social competence). It should be noted that the school has freedom to define such projects on its own, provided that these are in line with the suggestions of the local education authorities, since the chief education officer controls a certain amount of money for such activities</p> <p>At this school, the parents participated in a survey in order to decide upon the specific topics most urgent to improve as regards their own children's social behaviour. 88 per cent of the parents participated. Apart from the collective projects mentioned above, the school has almost no time left for local adaptation of the curriculum at school or class level to complement the fixed national prescriptions of L97, which are found to be very detailed and demanding.</p> <p><b>Methods of Teaching/Learning:</b></p> <p>Additional decisions on methods to be obligatory for the whole school (apart from those in L 97) are made at this school. These are based on discussions at staff meetings on how to reach the overall objectives of the school (e.g. in social competence, reading/writing). Every teacher must make a written proposal on how to implement the teaching in the classroom and how to evaluate and document the results.</p> <p><b>Source: (Smehaugen, 2007:67-68)</b></p>

### 4.3 Regional Experiences across Sub-Saharan Africa

In the same way globalization is becoming an increasingly permeating phenomenon, “so too is educational decentralization being acknowledged as one of its major and pervasive affiliates across SSA region” (Redeout, 2000:67). Many countries in the region have gone through a robust transformation from high levels of centralization to diverse models of

decentralization. Interestingly, it seems as though many political leaders ‘turned a blind eye’ to the positive factors which gave impetus for centralization after colonialism in favour of the promises offered by decentralization, such as improved democratization and civic participation (Gershberg & Winkler, 2003). However, the study by Naidoo (2002) on decentralization across SSA reviewed that too much centralization or absolute local autonomy can be harmful. For instance, Uganda may be a shining example in the region given that country’s successes (Namukas & Buye, 2009), but the implementation process is still characterised by political and financial risks, suggesting that decentralization is not just complex, but also a process which cannot bear fruits in the absence of sustained political will and a shared vision among stakeholders.

Similarly, field experiences from Tanzania and Nigeria indicate that educational decentralization is a process of trial and error, whose implementation is often politically driven with very little input from local level stakeholders (Naidoo, 2002). Quite often only lip-services are paid which does nothing to improve accountability and the institutional capacities as far as the sub national level is concerned. The situation in Lesotho, in fact, attests to the fact that successful implementation of educational decentralization requires not just well functioning administrative structure, but more explicitly defined roles and responsibilities for local level actors which, unfortunately, have been lacking in that country (Redeout, 2000). The similar political history among many countries in the region explains why Zambia is not an exception. If anything, the country has an opportunity to learn lessons from countries such as Uganda or South Africa where results are reportedly somewhat impressive.

While there are variations in the administrative and legal arrangements within the region, the central challenge to almost all countries is that there is, “tension between the attempt to dismantle highly centralized educational bureaucracies and efforts to create a well devolved system with varying levels of autonomy, accountability and institutional capacities” (Hanson, 1997:19). Below is a discussion of these three principles in terms of how they account for the experiences in the region to date.

#### **4.3.1 Incentives for Autonomy**

Stronger autonomy is crucial to the success of educational decentralization reforms in any given setting. Autonomy however, needs to be counterbalanced with accountability,



without which it can be difficult to achieve success in a decentralized system (De Grauwe, 2005). Yet, having a decentralized education system does not necessarily foster increased autonomy just as autonomy is not an outcome of decentralization as such. Just like authority, “increasing autonomy at one level may result in reduction at another” (Coleman & Earley, 2005:75). In their 2007 study of education boards in West Africa, De Grauwe and Lugaz explored this issue in detail. They found out that top officials at the district level can exercise their autonomy successfully if it enhances their professionalism but on the other hand, this constrains technical personnel that directly perform monotonous or less demanding duties.<sup>21</sup>

There are also relevant lessons from elsewhere. In Canada and the United Kingdom, for example, educational decentralization can be said to be robust. Policy is conceived centrally but implementation is effectively done locally with sufficient levels of autonomy (Coleman & Earley, 2005). The key question when it comes to Zambia, therefore, may not just be what autonomy or freedom DEBs need, but rather, “what balance to strike with accountability and autonomy under appropriate institutional structures” (Dillon, 2011:32).

### **4.3.2 Rationale for Accountability**

Many countries across SSA have adopted educational decentralization for one simple reason. That reason is to increase efficiency by bringing decision making closer to the people (Hanson, 1997). Nevertheless, this raised high demands for improved accountability in order to counterbalance factors that constraint transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of education. But having a good accountability system regardless of how well outlined, is not enough. Rather, for any decentralized education system to yield success, those with decision making authority must be open for scrutiny and should exercise power within the scope of their responsibilities (Coleman & Earley, 2005). There are risks however, associated with too much power concentrated at one level or thinly divided authority at different decision making points. For example, a study on local level educational governance in Senegal, Guinea, Mali and Benin indicated that the absence of well delineated power relations, responsibilities and transparency mechanisms (weak accountability system), resulted into difficulties in identifying who was accountable

---

<sup>21</sup> Refer to pages 139-45 for further details regarding the findings of their 2007 study which has been cited in the thesis.

for poor pupil performance between District Education officials (DEO) and School Management Committees (SMC) (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2007). Lessons from Tanzania and Uganda, however, demonstrate that where there is transparency and participatory budgeting at the district level, a critical link between government and DEOs and SMCs can be established which in can lead to improved accountability (Litvack et., al.1998).

### **4.3.3 Building Institutional Capacities**

Besides autonomy and accountability, the issue of institutional capacity is equally critical in as far as educational decentralization across SSA is concerned. In the same way the setting up of accountability mechanisms in a decentralized education system is a daunting task, so too is the objective of building institutional capacities for better implementation. However, the rationale for strengthening institutional capacity whether at the regional or the district level, equally demands resources and clear responsibilities. This then raises the questions: Do central governments have the administrative capacity to provide technical and financial assistance where and when it is needed? Do regional or district institutions have the capacity to deliver expected services in an efficient and effective manner?

Evidence on these questions is scant. Given the institutional capacity constraints in Ghana, it is not clear whether or not improvements in the quality of basic education in that country can be attributed to educational decentralization alone or other factors (Naidoo, 2002). Despite substantial efforts around the 1980s and 90s, Naidoo observed, as well in Nigeria that educational decentralization process remained politically and administratively weak as it is fraught with institutional and structural challenges. He added that DEOs, SMCs and community based organizations in in these two countries still encounter multiple and overwhelming demands, and their role vis-à-vis that of other stakeholders in administering basic education is constrained by not so well developed institutional setup. Contradictory effects of educational decentralization in Tanzania are equally interesting to comment on. Tanzania has enjoyed impressive gains in community participation, yet there are discrepancies between centralized planning and local level participation and autonomy. This situation is likely to be perpetuated, since formal institutional arrangements of the education system at sub the regional national level, still by default, locates decision making authority at the center (Therkildsen, 2000).

In light of the different experiences, it is difficult to identify an exemplary model of decentralization in the region but more or less positive measures which are context based. The above experiences also point to what has been referred to as, “deep-rooted but ongoing tension between downwards (government to communities) and upwards (the reverse) articulations of responsibilities” (Naidoo, 2002:37). Therefore, this demonstrates how extraordinarily complex the implementation of educational decentralization has been in the region. In fact, there is wider evidence in support of Naidoo’s assertions. For example, UNESCO’s 2005 report of national decentralization experiences from Latin America and Asia highlighted general complexities of educational decentralization processes in which the macro-level economic and political contexts impinge on implementation. Arguably, the challenges of decentralization in education for countries such as Peru and Pakistan are probably just as much politically as technically driven (UNESCO, 2005). In the same vein, country specific experiences in the table basically show that educational decentralization is primarily a political process, which, in most instances, serves as a tool for political expediency by the powers that be.

**Table 1: Summary of Experiences from Selected SSA Countries**

Country	Environment & Context	Rationale for Educational Decentralization	Form of Educational Decentralization	Results/Outcomes
<b>Ghana</b>	Some historical tradition of decentralization, focus on centralization in the first 30 years of independence. Ongoing decentralization since 1988	Shift locus of decision making to local level as a means to decentralize state institutions. Cost reduction by cutting state expenditure. Efficient use of and allocation of resources	Regions (10) coordinate districts (110). Common Fund, property, fuel and minor taxes and fees at local level. Districts responsible for urban services primary education, and health	Mostly deconcentration of administrative authority with little decentralization of institutional decision making authority. Ministries continue to operate in a centralized way
<b>Nigeria</b>	Previous military administrations enhanced power of center and main source of revenue. Centralization of power and deconcentration of structures	Increase local participation in governance. Means to fight corruption in state structures. To promote social equity	Federal system with states (36) and municipalities (774). Government involved in education, health and welfare provision. Federal control of national policy	Partial devolution- more administrative deconcentration. Existence of a variety of local government structures for mobilizing local resources.
<b>Tanzania</b>	New vision focusing on national issues and programs conducive to the operation of a market economy	Local development more effectively managed by institutions closer to the people. Ensures that development is effectively planned and controlled. To promote efficiency and effectiveness	Two layered system of urban and rural authorities (1984). Strengthening of local government (1996-2000). Local government responsible for primary schools, health, and planning	Mostly deconcentration of administrative functions. National standards set for local services delivery.
<b>Uganda</b>	Political and economic turmoil in the 70s created a strong impetus to rehabilitate all aspects Uganda national development. Strong legal framework to support decentralization introduced	To reduce workload of central officials. To improve accountability and effectiveness. To develop organizational structures suited to local circumstances. To improve service delivery at the local level	Districts (43), counties (150) and sub counties. Unconditional and equalization grants. Districts responsible for education, health and basic urban services	Some devolution of administrative and political decision – making have taken place. Higher levels of government pushing resources burden to lower levels

Source: (Naidoo, 2002:31-37)

## 4.4 Other Relevant Case Studies

### 4.4.1 Patterns & Policy Implications in West Africa

The main objective of this study was to identify the major challenges facing DEBs and SMCs and to assess how the decentralization policy transformed the educational landscape at the local level. By design, this study was rooted in qualitative methodology. It was framed along the argument that, “although decentralization is seen as a fashionable reform, little is known about its implementation at the local level or its impact on the functioning of DEBs and PTAs” (De Grauwe & Ludaz 2010:21). Their research covered four West African countries [i.e. Benin, Mali, Guinea & Senegal] and, in terms of data collection,

national diagnoses and field surveys were used while the selection of sites in each country was based on location, size and number of non-civil servant teachers.

Although a synthesis of their key findings shows rays of hope, an unimpressive picture is painted regarding the pattern and policy implications of the boards' operations (De Grauwe; 2010). Taking into account the initiatives that were undertaken in these countries, the study concluded that lack of transparency, weak local capacity and unequal distribution of power, including scarcity of resources explain why decentralization policy processes did not improved education service delivery (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2010). De Grauwe and Lugaz added that although educational decentralization has a number of incentives, country specific contexts tend to account for mixed results<sup>22</sup>. The fact that this study was nonetheless, undertaken in four countries, paved the way for some cross-country inconsistencies in the methodology. Given its scope<sup>23</sup>, it is difficult to appreciate how the study in practice explored the comparative dimensions on the aspects explored considering the contextual differences across countries. For this reason, this study seeks to explore this limitation by applying a comparative case study of two different education boards, but at the same time focusing only on one country thus, Zambia.

#### **4.4.2 Education Decentralization in Kerala State of India.**

The above case relates to the 2004 study by Bray and Mukundan, in which the main objective was to examine complex challenges pertaining to the implementation of educational decentralization policy in Kerala. Primary schools were the basis for which responsibility was transferred to districts and villages. Of interest is also the recent study by Bjork (2003) which paralleled that of Kerala and whose focus was on educational decentralization reforms launched in Indonesia, in 1994. Policy rhetoric in Indonesia was strong at the central level, but Bjork's investigation revealed a striking degree of stagnation, as opposed to transformation in schools. He concluded that, "what had been slatted as a major reconfiguration of the education system had yet to induce any significant changes at the local level" (Bjork, 2003:184). Although factors for the situation in Indonesia were country specific, the experiences have implications elsewhere, like in Kerala or Zambia for that matter.

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid :139-144

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 26-31

Policy rhetoric in educational policy research may be related to what others coined as “political symbolism” - a concept used to explain why the literature on education policy and practice in developing countries is characterized by narratives of ‘failure’ attributed to the lack of resources, weak implementation strategy, and the problems of policy coherence (Jansen, 2003). By building on Jansen’s view, it can be argued that the construction of political symbolism might be the first step in developing a more elaborate theory to explain major challenges in educational research – the gap between policy ideals and practical outcomes.

In articulating the gap between rhetoric and reality in Kerala, Bray and Mukundan (2004) stated that, “even in a society with high levels of education and strong traditions of participation, educational decentralization is not easy to achieve” (p.47). It is no wonder, Bray and Mukundan (2004) stated that, “the multifaceted big-bang educational decentralization model in Kerala, despite its strengths, encountered peculiar limitations such as lack of technical competence by implementers at the district and school levels” (p.47). On the other hand, Bjork (2003) raised the obvious question whether time would make a difference. He challenged himself whether he was too hasty in drawing conclusions based on his findings about the fate of the reform only four years after it had been enacted, and whether ten or more years were required to achieve results. This question is applicable not only to Kerala alone, but also in countries with similar settings.

My impression of the two cases is that there are comparable forces at play in both Kerala and Indonesia, which ultimately affect implementation. It can be argued, therefore, that educational policy and practice seem to be a series of movement - two steps forward and one backward and by so doing, practical lessons are learned (Sutton & Lenvisson, 2001). Other researchers see this differently, “if decentralization is seen as a process and implemented according to policy recommendations, then at some stage it would be justifiable to stop since a decentralized system would have been established, and there would be no need to continue” (Di Gropello, 2004:97). Nonetheless, the experiences discussed in these cases appear to point in one direction, and this is that the benefits of educational decentralization are less straightforward than often claimed. The Kerala and Indonesian cases, in particular, raise fundamental questions about the objectives and practicalities of educational decentralization reforms whether at regional, provincial or

district level. Thus, despite contextual differences, the experiences highlighted in this chapter are of relevance to the *Zambian* model of educational decentralization in general and to this study in particular.

## **Chapter 5: Theoretical & Conceptual Framework**

---

The purpose of this chapter is to outline of how the study was organized at the theoretical and conceptual level. It has two main parts. The theoretical framework, analyses those perspectives which are relevant to the study. The conceptual framework, on the other hand, outlines the main concepts of the study and goes further to highlight how they are connected to the key research questions. All in all, this chapter informs the methodology and above all serves as the reference point for data analysis and discussion of findings.

### **5.1 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework is a critical component in social science research in the sense that it serves as a guidepost for the theoretical perspectives, which underpin a given theme under investigation such as educational decentralization. Building on the rationale presented below, the discussion examines theories or ideologies underlying decentralization in the education sector.

#### **5.1.1 Rationale for the Theoretical Framework**

In a case study design, theories can be applied in order to explain, predict, and understand a particular social phenomena but also, “to challenge or build on the existing knowledge within the context of what is termed as critical bounding assumptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:223). As such, the theoretical framework gives an opportunity to demonstrate how one understands the theories underlying the research topic (Patton, 2002). In this regard, the statements of the problem as well as the research questions serve as the building blocks on which the theoretical framework is anchored.

#### **5.1.2 Overview of Theories on Decentralization**

Understanding a phenomenon, such as decentralization, is a daunting endeavor which is not as simple as the concept is perceived (Litvack et al., 1998). Taking into account the complexities of a decentralized education system, such as that of Zambia, one cannot entirely rely on a given set of theoretical assumptions due to potential risks associated with distorting the accuracy and objectivity of social reality in a given setting. Nonetheless, it is imperative to underscore the fact that decentralization, like any other social phenomena



may be understood in relation to diverse perspectives. According to Lauglo (1995), these perspectives justify other options as opposed to bureaucratic centralism which is perceived to be on the decline, although certain tensions between centralization on the one hand and decentralization on the other, still persist. It appears however, that there is no dominant theoretical tradition on which the concept of decentralization is founded. This sentiment seems valid in as far as the theoretical warfare concerning the demise of socialist state planning following the collapse of the Soviet Union is concerned, and given also that modern societies are often driven by competitive politics combined with varyingly successful market economics (Lauglo, 1995). It is also claimed that decentralization serves as a buffer against political de-legitimisation where central control is widely perceived as ineffective.

There are theoretical underpinnings which profoundly motivate the advocacy for decentralization, but then again these can help explain why decentralisation still remains questionable. Attractive claims made in support of decentralization range from its capacity to enhance economic efficiency to strengthening democracy and promoting good governance (Weiler, 1990; Rondinelli and Cheema, 1983). Besides the different forms of decentralization, there are various political and economic ideological traditions such as participatory democracy, liberalism, and federalism, all of which provide theoretical insights about decentralization. In the following sections, an account of each of these rationales and its respective relevance to this study is provided.

#### **5.1.2.1 Participatory Democracy**

To the extent that it expands our theoretical horizon in understanding the practice of decentralization, participatory democracy in the 1970s became an active force in education policy debates in many Western countries (Lauglo, 1995). Theoretically, participatory democracy attaches greater importance to stronger local autonomy and accountability in decision making as a way of enhancing ‘collective responsibility’ at the local level. This is so especially where decision making authority demands wider consultation. However, according to Held’s (2006) model of democracy, the usage of this concept goes beyond conventional politics to encompass certain institutional aspects. Therefore from an institutional perspective, participation becomes more than just mere voting for representatives for instance, to ‘active involvement’ in decisions that concerns a given

community. It is also widely accepted that ‘democratic participation’ is a “good thing” while non-participation is a bad for citizens. A distinction between the two alternatives is often entertained in political science debates – “either we have social inclusion (good) or social exclusion (bad)” (Chandler, 2001:1). From a point of view of a decentralized education system, one can argue that participatory democracy results in the increased involvement of those who are most directly affected by the decisions made. In this regard, it is logical for them to participate.

Although it is widely popularized in the political discourse, the real and practical application of participatory democracy often fails to meet expectations. Usually, participatory democracy tend to be reduced to a simple rhetorical manoeuvre by the powers that be if not an exercise for mere consultation, leaving power relations and authority between leaders and subjects at the lower level intact as ever before (Sintomer & Maillard, 2007). Thus, participatory democracy in education becomes an open-ended notion subject to trial and error. Given these assertions, certain democratic ideals within the confines of the DEBs and PTAs may ‘seem robust’ but still it is difficult to know what might work and what might not in education, considering the low levels of experience and awareness for democratic participation.

As a theory that explains decentralization, participatory democracy has its ideological roots in democracy, although its desired benefits are hard to achieve. The general perception among scholars (Rondinelli, 1999; Lauglo, 1995) who have commented on this theoretical concept is that the state and its bureaucratic machinery are suppressive, in so far as authority for control and decision making are concentrated at the top. Whenever authority is concentrated at the centre, greater parental and community involvement becomes problematic, since these actors are not accorded a platform to express views on how schools should be run for the benefit of their children.

Essentially, the exercise of power by MoE top officials in Lusaka may be seen by definition, as counter to the will of those who are opposed to it at the district level. But “suppressive” is, in a way, another and pejorative concept, implying lack of legitimacy for the exercise of power. In this case, the adoption of the educational decentralization policy in Zambia might be in favour of those who advocate of participatory democracy. The argument might have been in favour of relaxing the control of education from the centre through devolution of more powers to lower level on grounds that this would enhance

participatory decision-making. Thus, the establishment of DEBs implicitly entails promoting participatory democracy since it has allowed all stakeholders both at district and school level to have a say in decisions regarding the delivery basic education.

#### **5.1.2.2 Liberalism**

Political assertions in favour of the decentralization policy hinge on a liberal democratic tradition in which the ideals of ‘freedom from repressive tendencies of the state’ and ‘individual liberties’ are central. According to Lauglo (1995), those who subscribe to liberal values see the pursuit of “individual freedoms” and of broader ‘dispersal of power and authority’ from the centre to local authorities as an imperative undertaking. Liberal democrats claim that decentralization is a mechanism through which the state can increase its responsiveness to citizens’ demands such as education and health (Smith, 1985). Smith added that the most compelling motivation in favour of decentralization is the strong linkage with liberal philosophies save what Lauglo (1995) emphasized that, “liberalism has become a ‘broad creed’ that justifies diverse and sometimes conflicting, objectives of decentralization” (p.11). In that sense, decentralization can be seen to promote such values as; responsiveness, accountability and autonomy are dear to liberalists, although in a stricter sense “accountability” is not really a mainstream liberal mantra, although it may be associated with more populist concepts of democracy which support the view that experts should be held to account for their decisions and actions and that power corrupts.

Economics as a discourse equally features a strong link between liberalism and decentralization. Grossman (1989) stated that the concept of decentralization is rooted in the theory of ‘public choice’ and ‘political economy’ in which humans are regarded as rational beings. Since humans are rational beings, it then follows that they know best how to decide on their economic welfare (thus efficient production vs. individual freedom) based on their rational choices that yield maximum satisfaction for their individual needs (Lauglo, 1995). However, the theory of ‘public choice’ does not necessarily negate the existence of public goods. In fact, “choice” advocates do not argue that central government should only restrict itself to the provision of public goods. It should also control and regulate the market at all levels, especially when the actors in the market lack information for making the choices that can maximize the achievement of their goals.

Grossman (1989) touched upon the idea of public choice which provides a case for restricting the role of the state. Grossman's analysis of the emergence of a political economy school of thought highlights an alternative for addressing the allegedly retrogressive role government in its curtailing of individual choices. It seems therefore, that since governments are rent seeking as perceived by public choice theorists, decentralization then becomes a means of facilitating opportunities aimed at maximizing individual preferences. By implication, educational decentralization in this case at the district and school level, may entail more sensitivity to parents and pupils' choices for example, on basic education services rather than decisions made at provincial or national level for that matter.

If we consider one of the objectives of the educational decentralization policy in Zambia which is to empower local communities by devolving decision-making authority, then that brings in the question of local autonomy for DEBs. This is particularly so since autonomy accords DEBs with the flexibility for making independent decisions on how best educational needs at the communities can be met. Again, a closer look at the notion of autonomy as it relates to the functioning of Chongwe and Solwezi boards indicates that autonomy is an integral part of the ideals and values of liberalism. In that sense, liberalism provides useful theoretical insights which are relevant to the research question regarding the transfer of responsibilities and authority- which in a sense influences local autonomy of DEBs.

### **5.1.2.3 Populist Localism**

“Populist localism, understood as an appeal to ‘the people’ against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values, should not be dismissed as a pathological form of politics of no interest to the political theorists, for its democratic pretensions raise important issues” (Canovan, 1999: 2-4).

If we look far back into the history of the United States and Norway, we can find certain ideological identities which show how populist localism relates to decentralization (Canovan, 1999). Theoretically, populist localism embraces the principle of “rule by the people” which, in practical terms implies a direct form of democracy. The key assumption is that “if the representatives of the people are allowed to “absolutely” govern at all levels, chances are that they might rule to perpetuate their own interests rather than that of ‘the

people' they supposedly serve<sup>24</sup>. Thus, the existence of Chongwe and Solwezi boards should be seen to provide a direct link between DBOs and the 'silent majority' at the local level. This is necessary as it fosters representative democracy, without which democracy becomes troubled.

On face value, populist localism is democratically appealing in any governance system since concepts of 'popular power' and 'popular decision' are at the core of democratic ideals. However, globalization seems to have reduced populist claims to a mere conservative tradition, far beyond, from being regarded as a vibrant force it once was. According to Lauglo (1995) the ideological foundation for populists has been weakened by the very development which they popularly opposed or sought to contain or modify-modernization. In the context of educational decentralisation, populists feature prominently because of their appeal for stronger community and parental control of schools. It has been stated:

"For populists perceive schools to be neither extensions of state bureaucratic authority, nor the property of the professional establishment; they are supposed to be governed as directly as locally as possible by 'the people' whose good sense of judgment and rights of direct self-government populism upholds" (Lauglo, 1995:7)

Besides the concept of representative democracy, which has just been talked about, it should be born in mind as well as that populist localism as the ideology hinges on the unified assumption of 'the people' in which it is assumed that a shared culture underpin their common identity (Canovan, 1999; Lauglo, 1995). The people are understood as a collective entity thriving on the basis of common culture, ethnicity or race. Rather than being inferior, populists consider a cultural entity as more superior than a political one. Thus, traditional local 'self-help' educational initiatives in certain Islamic states, mosques schools are justifiable since they are founded on cultural populism ideology aimed at deepening the sense of collectivism and local betterment (Lauglo, 1995:7-10). Thus far, the mushrooming of community schools in Zambia might also be partaking of the blessings of populism tradition

Although the assumption for populism appears to have been eroded from the modern political discourse, this ideology is, in certain instances, still applicable. In Zambia for instance, the principle for educational policy on which decentralization rests is for purposes of giving the people an opportunity to provide basic education services (MoE,

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.p.17

1996). In fact, under the current decentralized education sector, “the involvement of the people is now a rule not an exception it was before” (MoE, 1996:135). It can be argued that when the people or communities participate effectively, accountability can improve. But this can happen at different levels as well. For example, direct accountability to the people in the local community is in itself an aspect of populism since, to a larger extent, teachers may not really be public civil servants but local civil servants who are directly accountable to “the people” served (Lauglo, 1995). To the extent that community involvement or people’s voice (i.e. Chongwe and Solwezi districts) leads to improved accountability in the delivery of basic education, then populist localism is relevant to this study.

## **5.2 Overview of the Conceptual Framework**

The process of reviewing the literature quite often leads to the delineation of the conceptual framework in terms of how it relates to the background of the study (Berger and Patchener, 1988). In their endeavour to understand how the conceptual framework guides the entire research process, Berger and Patchier raised an important question which one has to consider: Is there a clear and explicit connection between the theory and the aim of the study? The researcher has to ask himself this question as well: Has the conceptual framework of the study clearly described the key concepts of the study as they relate to the statement of the problem and the literature review? In line with these questions, Rudestam and Newton (1992) reiterated the following:

“A conceptual framework, which is simply a less developed form of a theory, consists of statements that link abstract concepts to empirical data. Theories and conceptual frameworks are developed to account for or describe abstract phenomena that occur under similar conditions” (p. 6).

Therefore, the rationale for the conceptual framework in this study is to outline key concepts and to explain how they are linked to the other components of the study. In research such as this, concepts are critical because they among other things serve as guide in making research conclusions, making meanings of reality and besides serve as a tool for understanding the phenomena being studied (Cohen.,et al, 2000). Cohen and others added that concepts have a significant relevance for researchers, given that “the more we have

them, the more sense data we can pick up and the surer will be our cognitive meanings of whatever is out there”<sup>25</sup>. But Robson (1993) noted that:

“Developing a conceptual framework forces you to be explicit about what you think you are doing. It also helps you to be selective; to decide which are the important features; which relationships are likely to be of importance or meaning; and hence, what data you are going to collect and analyse”. (pp. 150–151)

In the preamble, the perceived gap between policy and practice, as it pertains to educational decentralization in Chongwe and Solwezi, was highlighted. Using that as a point of departure, the concepts of ‘policy’ and ‘practice’ are thus defined below in accordance to how they are applied in this study. Note that the concepts of institutional capacity, accountability and autonomy have already been analysed in the previous chapter, therefore their presentation here is merely to redefine them by highlighted those aspects not touched upon earlier. This is done in order to show how they are interlinked in this study. Due to its significance in this project, the concept of power will also be defined.

### **5.2.1 Conceptualising the term “Policy”**

Policy as a concept is an integral part of public policy analysis which influences decision making in policy making processes. Hence, educational decentralization in Zambia can be seen as a by-product of public policy analysis since it encompasses the entire process of policy making beginning from the conception, adoption and formulation stage up to implementation (practice) by DEBs. However, the scope of policy and the manner in which it is appropriated in education is open to debate. And sometimes the literature for understanding this concept is diverse, divided and somewhat inclusive (Sutton & Levinson, 2001).

In this study, the term policy is defined as, “an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard actions or guide implementation of previous decisions” (Haddad & Demsky, 1995:18). Other scholars view policy as, “a normative decision making terminology in which rational decision making process comprises crucial elements of educational planning” (Sutton & Levinson, 2001:23). Essentially, policies are driven by implicit or explicit ideologies and motives which are deeply rooted in politics. This therefore, draws attention to the significance of power and control in policy formulation and implementation processes

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid:13-14)

(Hoppers, 2009). There are also other factors such as resource availability for basic education and range of policy choices or options among others which ultimately dictate the nature and scope of a given policy. This, in the end, adds to the complexity of the policy making as a process in education. Therefore, one can argue that the narrower the scope of a given policy, the less challenging it becomes during implementation and vice versa.

### **5.2.2 Practice of Policy Making**

Just as policy, the concept of ‘practice’ has assumed greater significance in policy making processes. This is due to the manner in which it (practice) influences implementation and the nature of policy outcomes. Note however that policy and practice are interlinked. Hence, they are an integral part of the policy making process in educational planning. In theory, practice may be synonymous to policy implementation. The concept of practice is nonetheless, understood as, “a way by which individuals and groups engage in situated behaviours which are both constrained and enabled by existing structures but essentially those which allow individuals to exercise agency given the circumstances” (Sutton & Levinson, 2001:23). Yet, one can argue that although “policy influences the practice”, a good policy does not necessarily guarantee ‘good practice’ and neither can impromptu policy decisions trigger meaningful policy outcomes although, this may not be always the case. Considering the complexities of these terms, it is understandable why even though educational decentralisation policy in Zambia is said to be well articulated, the manner it is practiced is at best problematic, at least, based on the general impression on implementation so far.

Although policy and practice are distinct concepts in the field of comparative and international education, the two are, as already stated, closely interconnected. Rather than separating them entirely, some scholars prefer to examine policy and practice (referred to as appropriation) as a dynamic interrelated process that extends over time (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). In fact, education experts seem to share a common understanding of educational policy as a “practice of power”, although they tend interrogate the meaning of educational “policy in practice” to account for the situated logic of planned activities across wide range of contexts (Haddad & Demseky, 1995). Conceptually, practice is a critical aspect of any educational policy such that depending of the desirability of a given



policy decision, expected results or otherwise lessons can be drawn to generate necessary feedback which makes the whole process cyclic in nature (Haddad & Demsky, 1995).

### **5.2.3 The Concept of Accountability**

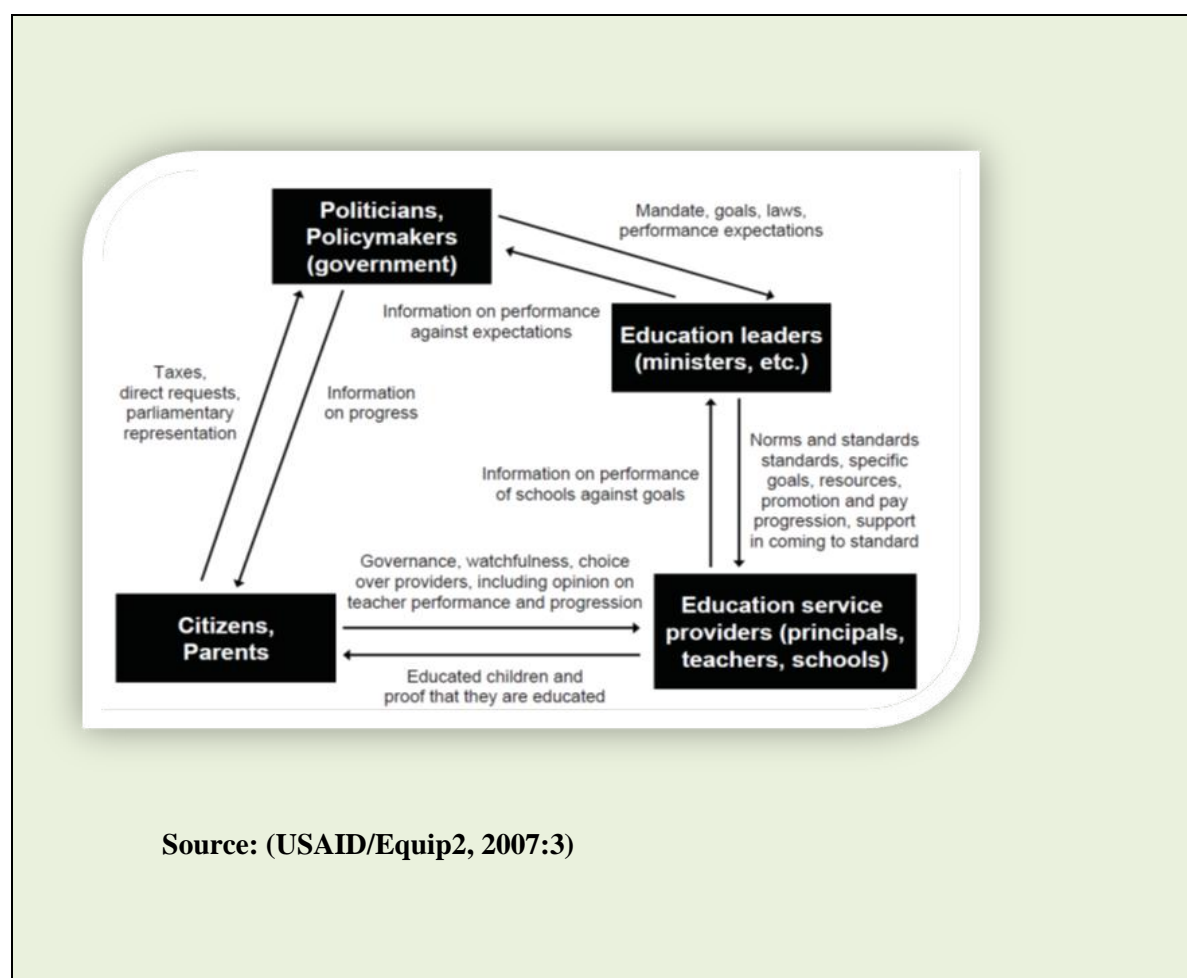
It is often taken for granted that educational services can be provided more efficiently by sub-ministerial structures since officials at that local level are closer to the people and have a better understanding of local context better than those at national level (De Grauwe, 2005). Decentralizing decision making autonomy and strengthening institutional capacity are however, by themselves not sufficient to guarantee effective delivery of education services. Unless officials at sub-national levels are explicitly given the leeway to be able to take advantage of their superior status, education service delivery would always be compromised (Di Gropello, 2004). This is where the concept of accountability comes in.

Accountability is one of the key factors which can determine success or failure of a given policy. It is generally claimed that, a decentralized education system can function more effectively if sub-national units are made accountable for their actions to both central government - the principal duty bearer and to the community - the primary beneficiary of the educational services (USAID, 2007). Note, however, that accountability can also be a constraint on local autonomy especially if it is over emphasised. But that does not mean it is not necessary since without it, it can be hard in to improve effectiveness and efficiency. For this reason, accountability “for results” as well as “for resources” used becomes a vehicle for ensuring that local autonomy is applied for purposes valued by those to whom they are accountable for.

It seems therefore, that accountability demands maintaining an optimal balance between upward and downward accountability relationships. And depending, of course, on a given model of educational decentralization, various interconnected accountability relationships can exist. In this study nevertheless, focus is on the “client power” and the “management” accountability relationships because these are the most critical elements in the Zambian context of educational decentralisation. In a decentralized education sector, a distinction between client power and management accountability relationships exists. The difference is that, “client power links clients to service providers while management, connects education providers and frontline professionals at ministerial level” (Di Gropello, 2004:57). Di Gropello’s accountability framework is similar to that of USAID both of

which are applicable to the Zambian model of educational decentralisation and more so relevant to this research project since ‘clients’ imply beneficiaries (citizens/parents/pupils) who through “voice” mechanisms are linked to politicians at constituency up to national level. Educational providers on the other hand, are basically the District Board Officials (DBOs) and ‘frontline officials’ being top MoE officials at headquarters. The extent, to which these relationships foster accountability or constrain education service delivery by DBOs in the case of Chongwe and Solwezi, largely depends on the nature of the demand (from beneficiaries) and supply (DEBs) side mechanisms.

**Figure 6: Public Education Accountability Framework**



In simple terms, this figure represents the sphere of influence between different actors. The accountability and power/voice relationships are conceptually interconnected. Ideally, each actor group can influence actions of the other (inner arrows = accountability; outer = authority/power vs. voice). For instance, politicians use their authority by giving the mandate to policy makers in the MoE to initiate policies. In return, policy makers are

accountable to politicians who are equally accountable to the electorates- citizens/parents. In practice however, things tend to deteriorate. For instance, even if there is a direct relationship between politicians and citizens, politicians quite often choose not to be accountable to parents who even though have the power (voice), may not despite having the voice be in a position to hold politicians answerable unless during elections - in which case the environment changes.

#### **5.2.4 Conceptualizing Autonomy**

In a decentralised education system, autonomy can be seen as a mechanism for increasing efficiency and effectiveness in education service delivery (Dillon, 2011). However, striking variations exist across different contexts on how autonomy is applied at sub-national level. In SSA for example, such variations are characterised by fiscal, administrative and pedagogical autonomy mostly at regional and district levels where such portfolios do not directly run schools (Naidoo, 2002). But in developed countries such as the US, charter schools and other autonomous schools are said to have been able to promote innovation in school management and increased access to high-performing schools. But then, not all charter schools have had the capacity to occupy the space created by autonomy with actions that enhance learning achievement (Dillon, 2011).

The concept of autonomy in this thesis is defined as “freedom” of sub-national units (provincial/regional, district and schools) in terms of being able to make independent decisions without interference from top officials at national level. Proponents of autonomy advance a number of freedoms such as, freedom over the control of financial and educational planning matters, control over staffing and teacher training and development, control over curriculum, and control over education planning (Dillon, 2011). However, the analysis of autonomy in this study is only confined to matters that directly pertain to the implementation of decentralisation at the district level and down to schools. In analysing autonomy, two principal actors have to be distinguished: central government which gives the mandate to decentralize, and the clients/parents who in this case, are the primary beneficiaries of the services provided. But if by this distinction autonomy is given, to what extent can Chongwe and Solwezi education boards be independent? This question is important and certainly, food for thought for educational planners and policy makers.

### **5.2.5 Conceptualizing the term “Power”**

Considering its prominence in the research questions, power is a central concept in this study. Generally, many people seem to have an idea of what ‘power’ means. Dahl (1957), however, claims there is no statement in social sciences which guides how this concept can be rigorously applied for a systematic study of a given social phenomena. Dahl added that as ancient the concept of power may be, “it is also ambiguous such that no theorists in history can boast of having coined an explicit definition” (p.201). However, Max Weber [1864 –1920] is a major source of a traditional definition of power. Based on weber’s conception, power may simply be the possibility that an individual acting within a social relationship can exert his or her own will even against the resistance of others (Eisenstaedt, 1968:xxv). If for example, DBOs accept the decision made by senior education planners at MoE headquarters in Lusaka as legitimate, on the basis that planners have “the right to decide”, then we have to look beyond power to consider that as authority. Thus, in Weber’s traditional sense, authority is defined as legitimate power.

The concept of power in education features prominently particularly when talking about decentralization which has led to the diversification of ‘authority’ from national level to sub-national units (McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Lauglo, 1995; Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983). Understandably, education boards in Zambia have been granted powers to make decisions over financial and administrative matters at district and school levels, although indirect supervision and control from the top still exist (MoE, 1996). This is an indication that DEBs still do not possess full authority in the practical sense of it. Since most of the decisions made are questionable from the top, one would argue that Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs do not have the legitimate power for controlling the administration of education at the local level. Therefore, the use “power” in this study is limited to DEBS’s managerial and administrative responsibilities including the control they are able to exert on key decision regarding the implementation of the decentralization policy.

### **5.2.6 Conceptualizing “Institutional Capacity”**

So much has already been talked about institutional capacity in the preceding chapter. However, just as accountability and local autonomy, institutional capacity is equally an integral component of the conceptual framework in this thesis. Generally, there seems to be a discrepancy across SSA between efforts and resources committed towards the

implementation of educational decentralisation initiatives and the results yielded (De Grauwe & De Lugaz, 2010). Besides the commonly cited factors (thus poor accountability and lack of autonomy), critics also point to weak institutional capacity as one of the contributing factors for poor implementation (Naidoo, 2002). As much as the financial and weak accountability mechanisms may be critical challenges in the Zambia sector, it is as well the institutional bottlenecks sounding the establishment education boards which compromise success. The question of how institutional capacity influences success or failure in the implementation of decentralisation, is an issue this study is trying to answer. But what in the first place is institutional capacity?

Literature regarding a commonly known definition of institutional capacity is scant. However, one can distinguish between an institution in terms of the organisational structure and system (e.g. rules and regulations, frameworks, operational procedures) and its capacity in terms of the means (e.g. financial and human resource needs etc.) required to achieving the intended organisational goals. Therefore, institutional capacity in this study is examined by focusing on formal organizational aspects within the institutional setup of Chongwe and Solwezi boards. Capacity being specifically seen as what these boards are able to do relative to the set educational decentralization policy objects.

In rounding off this chapter, it should be empathised that in the same way the theoretical dimensions of this framework are interrelated, so are its conceptual elements connected to each other. For instance, both participatory democracy and populist localism seem to rest on the assumption that people have the freedoms to decide on matters that affect their lives such as education. Of course, this is the ideal way of thinking but in reality each of these principles can deteriorate into something undesirable. Just as the case with policy and practice, autonomy may also be linked to institutional capacity. One can argue for instance, that without adequate institutional capacity, it can be hard for local units in a devolved education system to exercise their flexibility (autonomy) in planning and decision-making. The fact that Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs are faced with institutional challenges, might explain why MoE headquarters interferes in almost all issues under their jurisdiction. But this is an aspect this study attempts to explore in more detail in chapter eight.

## Chapter 6: The Methodology

---

“The practice of social research does not exist in a bubble, hermetically sealed off from the social sciences and the various intellectual principles which their practitioners hold. Research designs and methods of social research are closely linked to different visions of how social reality should be examined. Methods are not neutral tools but are linked to ways in which social scientists envision the connection between different perspectives about the nature of social reality and how it should be studied. Thus, research data are collected in relation to the problem which can either be a burning social issue or, usually, a theory” (Bryman, 2008:4).

### 6.1 General Overview

Taking into account Bryman’s assertion and in addition to the nature of the research problem under investigation, this chapter presents the methods applied during fieldwork. It begins with a reflection on the theoretical foundation as well as the underlying assumptions of research methodology which entails the process of knowledge generation in social sciences. This sets the stage for the delineation of the research strategy applied and the rationale for the selection of the targeted population including an analysis the process of fieldwork itself. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the methods applied and the limitations for the study. The final section highlights the approach for ensuring data quality.

#### 6.1.1 Philosophical Perspectives

Social scientists continue to engage in a philosophical debate about what constitutes knowledge and the methodology for generating facts. The methodology helps to know and understand reality better through application of scientific methods (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). This debate is however, multifaceted. One can, for instance, look at controversies between explaining and understanding facts, and the differences between positivism and post-positivism or between rationalism and reflectivism. In the following sections, an attempt is made to zero-in on the debate between positivists and post-positivists.

According to Chalmers (1999:1), “science is highly esteemed and theorists who believe that it is special, point to its methodological approach”. But what is special about science? What is about scientific methods that lead to reliable results? Underlying the idea of science is the notion of positivism, in which science is rooted in the empirical

epistemology<sup>26</sup> (Chalmers, 1999). However, not all empiricists subscribe to this position since the validity of empirical data can still be maintained even without applying the ethos of positivism. Epistemologically, the argument by positivists is that, “genuine knowledge is obtained through observation, adding that anything that cannot be experienced is not scientifically valid” (Bryman, 2008:14). Given the significance of their scientific tradition, positivists seem to misdirect themselves from dealing with ‘unobservable’ social realities which are nonetheless, important when it comes to constructing knowledge from the ontological perspective.

Post positivists disagree with certain aspects of positivism in as far as the philosophy of science is concerned. They do so by accepting the importance of meanings, beliefs, emotions and feelings. As such, post positivists incline themselves to interpretivism which considers meanings, human beliefs, feelings and values as important factors in the study of a social phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). This perspective can arguably, “play a crucial role in unearthing deep-seated meanings that exists beneath the surface appearance of empirical data, measurements or observed reality for that matter” (Chalmers, 1999:9). Since human emotions, perceptions and values are fundamentally not quantifiable, one can argue that they cannot be studied using the positivist approach which heavily relies of statistical data.

Given that quantitative research methodology is associated with positivism in so far as it embraces natural science principles, one can argue that limiting social science research to positivism alone can result into incomplete understanding of social reality. According to Bryman (2008), this shortcoming can be avoided when other perspectives of methodological approaches such as qualitative, are taken in to account since by nature, social science is subject to variations on how methodology makes the best fit.

By and large, one’s choice of a given research methodology purely depends on the context and research questions of the topic being investigated. Yet, different academic disciplines tend to be inclined to certain philosophical perspectives which in the final analysis, influence the choice of the methodology in general, and how data are collected in particular. With these limitations in mind, the qualitative methodology is applied in this

---

<sup>26</sup> As opposed to ontology which focuses on the what, how and why of social reality, epistemology is used to imply issues concerning the questions of what is or what should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a given field of study such as Comparative and International Education (CIE). A central position to epistemology, a position which positivists subscribe to, is whether or not the social phenomena should be examined according to scientific ethos or methods.

study in order to collect data which best answers the research questions in the introductory chapter.

### **6.1.2 Justification of the Methodology**

“Unlike the objects of nature, the layers of experience are not rigidly ordered, nor are its moving contents related according to mathematical patterns. Methods designed to study physical objects are not a good fit for study of human experiences. Therefore, data collection methods are specifically constructed to take account of particular characteristics of human experience and to facilitate the deeper investigation of the lived experiences within a particular context” (Polkinghorne, 2005:138).

This study is rooted in the qualitative epistemological position which recognizes the significance of locating qualitative research within a particular social, cultural, and historical context. However, a researcher needs to be cognisant of the limitations of this approach. Clearly, qualitative researchers still encounter challenges in securing a common research orientation, a situation which makes the very essence of qualitative methodology problematic (Bryman, 2008). Since qualitative methodology puts emphasis on the process, it was necessary to reflect on how the design for this study was influenced by the contextual factors in the field. It was equally important to reflect (during fieldwork) on the experiences regarding the implementation of the policy as well as on the explanations people constructed.

The purpose of the study and research questions influenced the choice of methodology. Three qualitative data collection methods were employed namely: Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and analysis of official documents. As noted by Patton (2002), qualitative research methods facilitate the study of issues in depth and detail. Contrary to being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis as it is the case with quantitative methodology, “approaching fieldwork with a sense of flexibility, contributes to the depth, openness and detail of qualitative inquiry which are key aspects of data quality” (Patton, 2002:5).

However, in selecting this approach it was necessary not to overstate or exaggerate the significance of qualitative methodology. This is why some scholars prefer to minimize the conflict between behavior and meaning in social research by applying mixed methods as a way of maximizing the strengths of both methodologies (qualitative vs. quantitative) while minimizing their weaknesses (Polkinghorne, 2005). Since the intention was to explore the



complex assumptions and experiences underlining the gap between policy and practice in the selected districts, qualitative approach was seen as appropriate. One of the reasons for choosing this approach is that it allows a researcher to see through the eyes of the people being studied' within a limited setting of the large context (Bryman, 2008).

### **6.1.3 Case Study Design: A Comparative Dimension**

Case studies' remains an important approach of qualitative research methodology. But what is a case study? A case study can be defined as, "the detailed and intensive analysis of a single or multiple cases - which deals with the complexities and specific nature of a given case" (Bryman, 2008:52). It can also be understood as a method for investigating a particular social phenomena within the context of its 'lived-life' (experienced) as contrasted with 'unlived' (un experienced) in which multiples techniques of gathering evidence are used (Yin, 1984). Critics nevertheless, argue that studying of a smaller number of cases hardly provides the basis for grounded reliability or generality of findings due to an individual's exposure to biases. Nevertheless, case study approach can work provided a researcher engages in careful planning and systematic application of guiding principles in a real life setting. Indeed, case studies can illuminate on the investigation of the relationship between the subjects under study and their context (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 1984).

If one's research topic demands to determine the uniqueness of two comparable cases as was the case in this study, then a two-pronged design in which each case has similar questions is necessary, so that it is possible to make comparison about the findings (Maxwell, 2005). Since DEBs are the focal point in the implementation process it was thus, logical to select at least two comparable cases; i.e. Chongwe and Solwezi. These districts were not just of interest in their own right. Ultimately, the aim was to provide comparable explanations pertaining to the realities on accountability, institutional capacity and autonomy – three key factors which impinge on implementation. The reason for adopting a comparative approach was to find out whether or not there were comparable differences and similarities in implementation and the extent to which these factors are attributed to that.

### **6.1.4 Practical Considerations**

What if we neglect the significance of practical issues in our resolve on how research should be conducted, or in our choice of the data collection methods? Researchers need to pay attention to these questions since social phenomena and research problems researchers often investigate are dynamic and complex (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This dynamism demands awareness of social reality which changes with time depending on context. The way a research problem is envisaged at the design state can differ from way it is viewed during in the field (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, the researcher should accommodate flexibility with the design and the data collecting plan depending on the reality on the ground.

Practical considerations<sup>27</sup> can involve confronting and resolving a wide range of other factors right in the field or shortly before which therefore, influences the direction of the study. In this research, a number of competing demands were faced. For instance, the budget directly influenced the choice of the methods and consequently adjustments had to be made to ensure that data would be collected in a cost-effective way. For instance, time consuming methods such as observations were avoided in order to reduce the cost.

## **6.2 Location & Rationale for the choice of the sites**

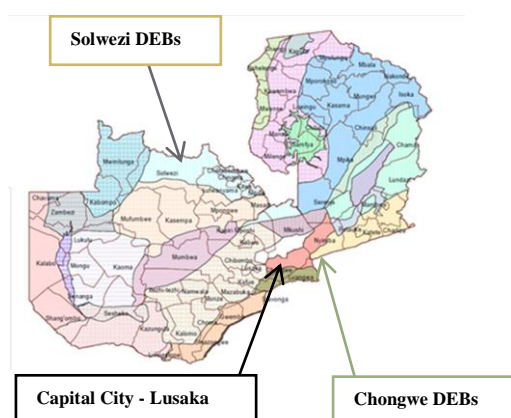
The need to situate qualitative research in a well-defined location is critical as it sets the boundary on the subject being studied. It has been stated that qualitative study should be carried out in a particular social setting where something actually happens (Maxwell, 2005). This study was carried out in Chongwe and Solwezi, which are two of Zambia's 72 districts. Although they are geographically different, the two districts are also similar as far as the scope of responsibilities and authority of education boards are concerned. Compared to Chongwe which is a rural district in Lusaka province, Solwezi is fairly urban. And besides, it serves as a provincial headquarters for North-western province which makes it an administrative epicenter for government activities in the province. In terms of geographical distance from the Lusaka, the capital city, Chongwe is the closest (45km) of the two while Solwezi (429.61km) is the furthest.

---

<sup>27</sup> Note: such considerations may entail factors such as timing for fieldwork, funding and accessibility to respondents

Demographically, Chongwe district represents a sparsely distribution at 1.4% of the total national population with an annual growth rate estimated at 4.2%. Agriculture is the main economic activity with over 75% of household income derived from agricultural relates ventures. Solwezi district on the other hand, is densely populated with an estimation of 205,797 people with more than 70% living in the rural outskirts of the district (MoE, 2008). The population in Solwezi is expected to grow faster than in Chongwe due to great potential in mining which has stimulated economic activities—a situation which is likely to increase demand for public services such as health and education (MoE, 2008). High incidences of diseases such as HIV/AIDS with its combined effects of poverty and its off-shorts have had a negative impact on the implementation of the educational decentralization in both districts.

**Figure 7: Map of Zambia showing Sites for the Study**



Why precisely these two districts? One important aspect of a qualitative case study design is the freedom enjoyed by the researcher in selecting easily accessible sites which best suits the budget and time schedule and of whose context one has an idea of (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:243). Further, as a Quota student<sup>28</sup> from Zambia, it was important to comply with the requirement that any international student under quota has to conduct his or her research in the country of origin. However, Chongwe and Solwezi districts were also chosen because it is at the district level where educational decentralization is being implemented from. Given the different distance of these districts from Lusaka, it was also interesting to assess, although it was not a key aspect of this study, whether proximity to the capital in any way influenced implementation of the policy.

<sup>28</sup> Quota is a financial support scholarship offered by the Norwegian Government to deserving international students from developing countries in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe including Central Asia.

## **6.2.1 The Process of Fieldwork**

Compared to scientific methodology where standardized research methods are applied, qualitative research tends to view social reality in terms of dynamic processes which cannot be investigated by a rigidly pre-determined approach. Patton (1990) argued:

“Qualitative research designs need not to be viewed as completely specified in advance of fieldwork ... since “qualitative design unfolds as fieldwork unfolds” (p.61).

Since qualitative research is a process, one is expected to be very personally involved in every phase of the process due to the fact that each decision made has to be based on personal experience (Fink, 2000). But depending on the research design, the process of fieldwork can be very complex and tedious. Besides, qualitative research has its own distinguishable stages, although researchers rarely follow its pre-determined progression. In this study, going back and forth from the design stage to the time of fieldwork was unavoidable. Thus, flexibility in implementing the data collection plan had to be secured which made it possible to make changes to the questions during fieldwork, whenever it was necessary. Therefore, the complexity of the process of fieldwork is centered on a given study design whose scope includes methodology and its interrelated steps (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Such steps obviously, affect how one can plan and implement a particular research project. Given the research questions, a decision was made to ensure that the study design was based as much as possible on qualitative interviews. This meant that choices had to be made on what types of interviews were to be applied (e.g. personal interviews) and how.

## **6.2.2 The Targeted Population**

Even if one had the means, it is not worthwhile to collect data from every individual in a given location since valid findings can still be secured even from a sample of a given population (Fink, 2000). However, this demands the application of appropriate sampling techniques such as convenient sampling which was used here. According to Bryman (2008), a convenient sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue its accessibility. Although there are limitations regarding the generalization of findings, “convenient sampling does play a critical role in qualitative research. Its strength lies in providing for the selection of ‘information rich’ cases of interest for in-depth analysis” (Bryman, 2008: 183). Guided by the research questions, it was possible to figure out which

and how many respondents were to be interviewed from the targeted population. This process helped in saving time, money and energy. Since the samples were drawn from three different respondent groups (national, district and schools), it was possible to triangulate certain responses on common questions which in the end improved the validity of the findings.

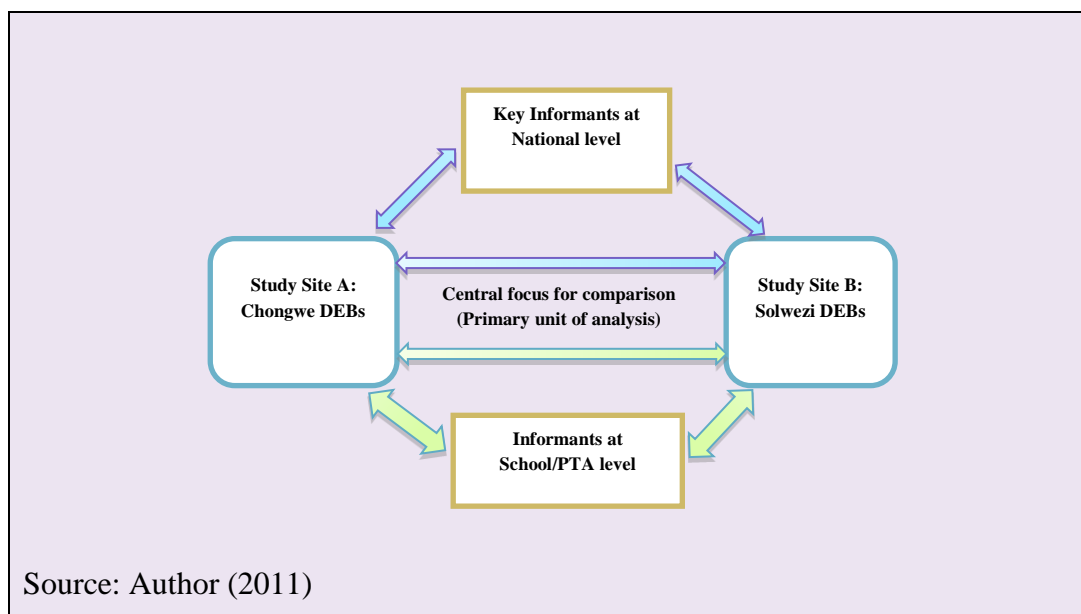
#### **6.2.2.1 National Level Informants**

Since the aim of this study was to analyse the gap between policy and practice in the implementation educational decentralization in Zambia, there was no way one was going to overlook key informants at national level since that is where policies are formulated. In addition, policymakers are expected to know what is going on in the field. Dealing with national level experts can pose challenges to the researcher since the interview session risks being dominated by the interviewee. However key informants according to Kvale and Brinkman (2008), remain a reliable source of rich data in qualitative research. As a result, a cross-section of 10 key informants from MoE headquarters, Donor agencies, CSOs, and academicians from the University of Zambia were conveniently sampled although only 8 were interviewed.

#### **6.2.2.2 District Level Informants**

According to the national education policy, education boards were established in order to implement educational decentralization activities (MoE, 1996). DBOs were the primary informants by virtue of the fact that they were the principle implementers of the policy. Since this study took a comparative dimension, Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs were considered as the main comparable 'unit of analyses'. As the figure below shows, these boards are linked to other geographical units (national & school level) from which other potential respondents were drawn.

**Figure 8: Linkages between Different Levels of Informants**



Using Bray and Thomas’ model of **‘the cube’** as the basis for comparison of places, it is logical to perceive the geographical units as being distinct from each other. Yet, these units are not disjointed but rather “conceived as set of nested structures, each hermetically inside the next...mutually influencing and shaping each other as in dialectic of the global and local” (Bray, et.,al, 2007:370). This is the reason why the sampling framework did not just focus on the district but also on national and school levels. Given the composition of the of the boards, a representative sample of approximately 10 (i.e. 66%) out of 15 board members was targeted in each district although it turned out that fewer than that were interviewed as certain members were not active in the boards, which may indicate low level participation in matters of their respective boards.

### 6.2.2.3 School Level Informants

FGDs were held at the school level. A sample in the range of 6-8 (i.e. above 70%) PTA members were drawn to participate in the discussion. This sample comprised the school head teacher, senior and junior teachers, pupil representative, parents and other members of the community. Through PTAs, parents have an opportunity to contribute not only through donations, but also by influencing decisions that affect the education of their children. The inclusion of PTA members in the sampling frame is therefore justifiable since they are much closer to the primary beneficiaries at the grass root level. Besides, they

may be the best judge of whatever benefits educational decentralization could have yielded so far.

In order to validate data from this level, two focus group discussions were conducted in each of the two districts bringing the total number to four. Although these groups were held at the same level as per Bray and Thomas 'cube model' (Bray et., al, 2007:369), selected schools had distinct characteristics by virtue of being in different locations (urban vs. rural). This implied that informants from each school might have had different views on the impact of educational decentralization in general, or the effectiveness of education boards in particular. Using the rural-urban criteria, Basic schools A (peri-urban) and Basic school B (rural) were selected in Chongwe. While in Solwezi district, Basic school C (urban) and Basic school D (rural) were selected. Note that this labeling was just for data identification purposes.

### **6.2.3 Accessibility to Respondents**

There is a tendency in social science research to select samples from the targeted population without thorough assessment of whether or not the sample is easily accessible. Maybe not so much for an insider who may know the context well, but for a researcher not familiar with the setting, this can be a great challenge which can only be solved by making adjustments to the sample right there in the field. This can unfortunately consume the allocated time and resources. Thus, gaining access to informants is always a matter of 'negotiating' and 'planning' ahead of time, which turns out to be a political process in itself involving what Bryman (2008) referred to as "gatekeepers interested in the researchers' motives" (p.131).

The collection of rich data in qualitative research depends on gaining access to the potential respondents, who should be motivated to answers questions frankly. However, getting access to the right people can be challenging as it depends on a combination of factors such as location, time, and budget (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Some people can also be more willing to participate in an interview, if the research topic is within the scope of their professional experience and interest. While in certain cases, the opposite may be the case.

With that in mind, I made sure that some of the key informants at national level were contacted on time. Where possible, appointments for interviews were secured way before leaving Oslo. Some of the informants requested to have questions sent to them before hand which made certain interview sessions less time consuming. However, this initiative can lead to biased data since informants can cook up certain responses in order to cover up unfavourable impressions about the reality. Since qualitative interviewing is like “interpersonal conversations” this limitation can be minimized if the researcher is so engaging during the interview sessions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). There are many ways of doing that but the easiest is ensuring that respondents are at ease so that they are able to give objective information based on their real experiences and true feelings on an issue.

Through assistance, fieldwork was conducted for a period of six weeks from the beginning of September to mid-October, 2010. Although all appointments with national level informants were confirmed beforehand, a few setbacks were encountered pertaining to the interview schedule as some respondents were very busy, but flexible enough to reschedule the interview. MoE officials in Lusaka were the first to be interviewed which made it possible to get a general picture about decentralization, and also to know whether there were other key stakeholder informants who might have been initially omitted. Besides, it was also important to get an introductory letter from headquarters, without which it would have been difficult to gain access to the respondents at the district and school level. Almost all interview sessions were held in the respondents’ offices.

The interview schedule at national level was planned in such a way that time was set aside to reflect upon each interview session which improved the quality of subsequent sessions. Coupled with the fact that some sessions had to be rescheduled, it was possible to use that spare time to make appointments for interviews with DEOs in Chongwe and Solwezi districts, through which logistics for conducting FGDs were organized. Having been based in Lusaka, it was easier to conduct fieldwork in Chongwe first before travelling to Solwezi where the last two and half weeks were spent before returning to Oslo. Although gaining access to national level informants proved challenging, the level of cooperation with informants at district and at school level was impressive. But cooperation does not necessarily imply frankness. In all instances however, informants were guaranteed anonymity, which gave them an opportunity to air their views freely.



## **6.2.4 My Role as a Researcher**

My role as a researcher is an important aspect of the methodology applied. In qualitative research, the researcher is an instrument of data collection (Bryman, 2008). Nonetheless, this demands careful reflection in dealing with and reporting on potential sources of bias and error in order to produce qualitative data that is credible, trustworthy, authentic, and balanced concerning the phenomenon under study, but data which is also fair to the respondents (Hammersley & Alkinson 1995). But a question can be raised: if a researcher is an instrument of data collection, how then can objectivity be guaranteed, and how could this procedure fulfill the criteria of scientific research?

In dealing with this valid question, it is critical to draw inspiration from the claim that, “it is dubious and naive to assume that a perfect criteria for data collection will ever emerge but until then, humility should be exercised in asserting that the ‘new’ and ‘truer’ passage (purely objective?) to scientific knowledge has been secured will be wise” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:331). This did not only entail being aware of my role as a researcher, but also of my presence as an insider, in the sense of being a Zambian carrying out research within my country.

Being an insider-researcher has the potential to impair one’s objectivity; but if high levels of impartiality are exercised, a researcher can still gather rich qualitative data that is objective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As opposed to being an outsider, I had an advantage of understanding the context, having worked in the sector before and having established good contacts with officials from different stakeholder organizations. The temptation of depending entirely on known informants was high, but this potential source of bias was dealt with by selecting districts and schools which I was not familiar with. Of the 8 informants interviewed at national level, one was my former workmate. This person was selected because of her position and considerable experience in educational decentralization. Understandably, our relationship may have affected the interview session. Upon listening to the recorded conversation, I noticed that rather than providing her objective opinions, she merely portrayed her artificial aggressiveness as she might have regarded me as an insider.

### **6.2.5 Ethical Considerations**

Research that is likely to harm participants is often regarded by many people as unacceptable. Ethical considerations imply upholding good values while avoiding harm as much as possible. Harm can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles. In qualitative studies, harm can vary depending on the nature and sensitivity of the research topic and quite often, tension is created between the purpose of the research to make conclusions or generalizations for the good of society and the rights of participants to maintain privacy (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Compared to quantitative research where statistical tools are applied, the nature of ethical problems in qualitative research can be subtle because of heavy dependence on feelings, opinions, and experiences of human beings as the primary source of data. Potential ethical conflict can arise depending on how one gains access to targeted informants and the impact the one may have on them. Since confidentiality can be difficult to attain in qualitative research, certain ethics must be upheld by those who seek to use this design by for instance, honoring informed consent of informants while at the same time avoiding the invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman, 2008).

The assumption that many informants were most likely going to accept to be recorded during the interview was not taken for granted. This meant seeking their informed consent by explaining the purpose of the study and why it was important to solicit for their opinions. Because of the possession of the official documents from UiO and MoE headquarters indicating the purpose of the study, no resistance was encountered. In negotiating for trust and consent, informants were reminded that they had the right to either accept or refuse to participate in the study. Due to the political sensitivity surrounding the implementation of the educational decentralization policy in Zambia, confidentiality and anonymity at all levels were upheld by not recording introductory remarks such as names and leaving out those comments that were off record or strictly personal.

## **6.3 Data Collection Methods**

As earlier stated, the data collection methods used were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and review of policy documents. Below is a detailed account of how each method was applied.

### **6.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)**

The use of SSIs was based on Patton's (2002) view that qualitative interviewing provides the researcher with an opportunity to assess the respondents' perspectives of their experiences, thoughts, knowledge, expectations and in some cases perceived changes as a result of their involvement or influence on a given program<sup>29</sup>. Thus, SSIs provided the opportunity to probe further issues that needed clarification, but at the same time creating space for flexibility for myself and informants. Although an interview guide was used, informants had the freedom to respond in any way they were comfortable with. As much as possible, SSIs of this kind demand substantial freedom on the part of respondents so that they are able to express themselves freely (Bryman, 2008:438). Besides the flexibility to ask questions about issues raised by informants, questions were adjusted depending on the respondent's knowledge and experience with the educational decentralization policy in Zambia. As much as possible, interview questions were open-ended, simple and direct, which ensured clarity. Three separate sets of interview questions were used to elicit views and experiences that were appropriate for the different respondent categories. Yet, some of the questions were cross-cutting based on the perception that certain views and experiences had implications across common issues.

Interviewing in qualitative research is not to be manipulative and neither should it be instrumental dialogue. Rather, a well conducted research interview should foster positive experience between the researcher and respondent because it is a rare experience that is enriching (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Since face to face interviews were conducted, questions did not only solicit the respondents views and feelings, but also sought to establish a positive experience which gave room to interpret respondent expressions and words that were connected to non-observable meanings. A positive experience was manifested in many ways. For instance, some respondents continued with the conversation beyond the limited time, possibly because the interview gave them an opportunity to explore insights about their experiences and views which otherwise they would not have expressed.

---

<sup>29</sup> See also page 341 of Patton 2002. Note: Qualitative researchers interview people to find out from them those things they cannot directly observe. This is based on the fact that no individual can observe everything. Indeed, no individual can observe feelings, thoughts, knowledge and intentions. Similarly, no individual can observe people's behavior about things that happened way back in the past..... "To the contrary, people can be asked questions about those things.

With the help of the research assistant, key points were jotted down during the interview process and all interviews sessions were recorded through the Olympus Digital Voice Recorder<sup>30</sup>, which minimized the degree of distraction on my part. At the end of each interview session, an interview audit was conducted to see if key points that came out during the interview session were effectively recorded. All in all, this procedure yielded a variety of perspectives ranging from dissatisfaction to contentment on issues of the educational decentralization policy and practice.

### **6.3.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

Two FGDs were conducted in each of the two districts. These groups were composed of six to nine members of the PTA<sup>31</sup>. As mentioned earlier, one PTA group was selected within the center of the district, while another in the rural outskirts.

Different factors influence the application of FGDs in qualitative research, and that is why the use of this data collection procedure tends to vary across different settings. There is no rule as to what number should constitute a focus group. Generally, “a group of this nature should comprise about 6 to 10 individuals sharing common background” (Patton, 2002:385). The strength of this technique lies in its diversity of perspectives created through participants’ interaction. Beyond that, participants can provide checks and balances on each other which weeds out erroneous and extreme views (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Despite these advantages, there are limitations as well. For instance, it was learned in this study that although consensus is not the ultimate objective, it is difficult to attain it in a FGD. Once certain participants feel that their views are inferior or parallel to those of the majority, they may be inclined to withdraw in order to avoid negative reaction from other opponents. Drawing from human tendencies as ‘social animals’, FGDs can be enjoyable. This is due to the group effects of the real world given that, “a social actor does not exist in a vacuum, but with other people in society” (Patton, 2002:386). For this

---

<sup>30</sup> Olympus Digital Recorder is a device commonly used to record speech so that it can be played back later or typed into print. The device provides superior sound, convenient file management and longer recording time with many models having the ability to quickly transfer audio files to a computer via USB, PC connection or removable media.

<sup>31</sup> PTA (Parent Teacher Association) is a formal structure at basic school level comprising of teachers, parents and members of various community based organizations working in that particular community. Quite often, this body is chaired by either the head teacher of the basic school or any renowned individual versed with issues of education. Thus, the chair and vice are quite influential in administering the operation of the PTA and the school.

reason, participants were comfortable not only to discuss the questions asked, but also went as far as challenging each other.

Conducting FGDs demands considerable group process and interpersonal skills. Hence it was important to moderate group discussions so that no participant dominated the discussion to the extent that others felt they had nothing to say. By adopting a “non-directional style”, a variety of perceptions and viewpoints from all participants were encouraged. Further, a wide range of questions were discussed with a view to assess whether the views of national and district level respondents were different from those of the PTA members as far as the implementation of decentralization was concerned. Despite a few challenges encountered, this procedure seemed useful and cost-effective. It also gave an opportunity to check and siphon-out extreme or invalid claims. For instance, some informants seemed dominated by others in the group discussion. When I approached them separately afterwards, they expressed themselves more freely and pointed to issues which they had not talked about during the discussion.

### **6.3.3 Analysis of Official Documents**

Documentary analysis is one of the most frequently used procedures for collecting both primary and secondary data in qualitative research<sup>32</sup>. Understandably, government ministries are a reliable source for both primary and secondary data usually kept in written form (narrative & statistics) or other recorded materials which may be at the disposal of any researcher (Bryman, 2008). In order to understand the historical background underlying the formulation of the educational decentralization policy in Zambia, key policy documents such as the national decentralization policy of 2002, the 2008 Operational Manual on Governance in Education Boards and a wide range of MoE sector policy documents were examined. As much as this method might be cheaper than conducting interviews, it also costs money in terms of photocopying documents. Besides, one has to seek authority to access certain documents which can be time consuming. However, various documents from the MoE and its cooperating partners were accessed either as online copies or in hard copy form.

---

<sup>32</sup> Primary data is that which is obtained from original or official documents which in my case were government policy documents and reports on educational decentralization policy from MoE. Secondary data on the other hand, refer to that which is collected from materials such as books, research articles in journals, newspapers, pamphlets but do not necessarily need to have a direct link to the study at hand.

## **6.4 Major Limitations**

There are no such things as perfect research designs, but instead there are always trade-offs (Patton, 1990). Therefore, the following sections present some of the constraints which were encountered based on the usage of the selected methods.

### **6.4.1 Time Constraints**

Time was one of the major limiting factors in this study. Given the scope of the research topic, five weeks was too short to be able to interview all the targeted respondents, let alone pre-test my data collection tools. There were also time constraints in terms of meeting some respondents, as they were presumably too busy to fit into my tight schedule. Had I not taken advantage of my professional network and the internet in accessing the main government policy documents beforehand, and also making prior appointments with key informants, I would have ended up having to extend the fieldwork period. This would have negatively affected my already limited budget.

### **6.4.2 Ethical Constraints**

During my second focus group discussion, one of the participants who joined the discussion shortly after it had already started, asked...

“What is that ‘small’ microphone on the table for? I hope you are not trying to record what we are going to say here. Some of us fear being quoted in people’s reports.”<sup>33</sup>

In response, anonymity was guaranteed by re-stating that the study was for academic purposes adding that no one was going to mention who said what and why. This question drew attention to the fact that dealing with politically sensitive research topics can sometimes render unavoidable challenges which the researcher has to fix. It might have been taken for granted that discussants would be open and not necessarily be on their guard, which turned out to be true. Therefore, depending on how one handles ethical issues in research, there can be implications for participants who have to decide what information to divulge or withhold. Since interviewee’s voices are the data in qualitative research, the challenge for the researcher is to maintain ethical standards while sustaining the integrity towards the production of quality research (Kanukisya, 2008).

---

<sup>33</sup> PTA#4/09/10/Edu/dec

### **6.4.3 Power Asymmetry**

When the researcher is not sensitive to “power relations” between and among informants, limitations in accessing information can arise because of participants exposing their dominance or inferior status in relation to others. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), “such tendencies emerge during group interviews because of deep-rooted societal and cultural values which delineate participants’ power relations on the basis of status, position held, gender, ethnicity or indeed level of education” (p.33).

Although all four focus groups were fairly balanced in terms of gender and representation<sup>34</sup>, power imbalances among discussants rendered them not as fruitful as they would have been under the ideal circumstances. For instance, some PTA members demonstrated their inferior status by simply agreeing with whatever the Chairperson or other superior PTA members said, although it was clear that they would give a different view under certain circumstances. When group discussions like these go without participants openly challenging each other, the researcher loses out on the opportunity of obtaining realistic accounts of what people think or feel about certain issues (Bryman, 2008:475). In short, power asymmetry is a serious limitation in qualitative studies with epistemological implications about the knowledge produced.

## **6.5 Data Quality Strategy**

A common practice in qualitative research is heavy reliance on humans as instruments of data since researchers heavily influence all aspects of the research process. Therefore questions can be asked: can qualitative researchers be relied upon? And how can quality be secured for that matter? However, this heavy reliance on human subjects by qualitative researchers can also be seen as a strength that leads to unearthing the existing truth. But still, others argue that “there is no way of establishing the truth of scientific nature in qualitative studies since qualitative research merely prompts thoughts which are relatively attached to the truth” (Merrick, 1999:25). Given the debate, how then can one ensure “data quality” in qualitative research? It is hardly surprising that considerable effort has been devoted towards developing a criteria and guidelines for promoting quality research. Data

---

<sup>34</sup> On average, the gender proportion across all groups was around 40:60, with male respondents having been the Majority in all cases.

quality is an aspect constructed during fieldwork and must be maintained throughout the entire process of data analysis and discussion of findings. Without that, one can have problems in drawing solid interpretations and conclusions from the views of informants. The following sections therefore demonstrate how data quality was promoted based on the principles of validity and reliability, which are increasingly becoming common in case study designs.

### **6.5.1 Constructing Validity**

The debate on what valid knowledge is, raises a philosophical question of what the truth is. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) argued that the truth can be discerned based on a number of principles such as *coherence* and *pragmatic* utility of knowledge, which are not exclusively detached from each other. Nevertheless, validity is not just an issue of choosing among the competing criteria of ensuring data quality. Rather, “it also involves falsifying certain interpretations based on the examination of provisions and arguments of relative credibility” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:247).

The principle of validity features more prominently in the positivist than in the subjectivist tradition and this is why its usage in qualitative research needs to be reconstructed (Golafshani, 2003). Failure to do so makes it difficult for qualitative researchers to convince others or indeed themselves that their own research findings can be trusted. But what sort of arguments can be mounted or what criteria can be invoked on this issue in order to persuade the audience? Explicitly, validity has got to do with “testing of hypotheses and the extent to which the research ‘measures’ that which it set out to or the degree of truth contained in the findings” (Golafshani, 2003:599). But given the inadequacies that come with applying validity in qualitative research, qualitative researchers apply other terms such as credibility, triangulation, transferability and trustworthiness which serve as a criterion for ensuring validity.

The use of different techniques of data collection gives an opportunity to triangulate different pieces of information, which implies reconstructing validity. Since there is no exclusive reliance on one method, it means that biases which pertained, for example, to SSIs were minimized by the data gathered through FGD, as well as the use of official policy documents and reports. The strength of triangulation in this study lies in the coherent contradictions and also on common sentiments by subjects interviewed.



Essentially, it is contradictory responses themselves which highlight the beauty of employing a variety of methods to ensure consistency and coherence of the data collected (Bryman, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Another argument for validity is that of “investigator triangular”. It has been claimed that using multiple investigators minimizes potential biases in collecting, reporting, and data analysis which contribute to internal validity (Kimchi et al., 1991). On the other hand, where there is more than one investigator, the degree of honesty and transparency is higher which increases the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The opportunity to work with an experienced assistant therefore enhanced the credibility of the data since it was possible to cross-check the notes as well as to figure out what they meant.

Validity (internal) can also be increased, when key informants are given an opportunity to review the researcher’s transcribed data files or comment on the report findings (Bryman, 2008; Kirk & Miller, 1986). Where this technique is used, the researcher benefits from having his or her reported statements scrutinized in order to assess the degree of accuracy and correctness. Although time constraints made it difficult send all transcribed interview notes to respective key informants in Lusaka, at least four informants were contacted via email. Their feedback on the notes was critical as they corrected editing errors and other erroneous statements which they felt were not accurately captured. Fortunately, some even went as far as adding useful information which they had omitted during the interview or which they noticed I had deleted based on my assumption that their views were too extreme and not objective. All in all, this initiative contributed towards constructing the internal validity and credibility of the data collected.

### **6.5.2 Constructing Reliability**

The criteria of reliability in qualitative research is often interchangeably used to denote the dependability of one’s research findings. One question begs an answer here: how consistent or trustworthy are your research findings? On the surface, this question seems easy, but underneath it points to the difficulty of maintaining reliability in qualitative studies since human behavior changes with time and circumstances. This raises the question of whether or not respondents can maintain the same responses on similar research questions if asked at different times by different researchers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As qualitative researchers, we cannot totally dismiss the criteria of reliability in our

work on the pretext that it would be more of a concern to those analyzing statistical data. By ignoring the issue of reliability, one is merely entertaining haphazard subjectivity which leads not only to questionable findings, but also to unreliable and unscientific conclusions.

There are many techniques for increasing reliability. But a common practice among qualitative researchers is the compilation of materials used such as field notes, official documents and other narratives of the data collection and analysis procedure (Kirk & Miller, 1986). In cases where the same design and procedure of data collection have been consistently re-applied elsewhere, chances are that similar conclusions can be arrived at. This, however, is mainly the tradition of those who employ statistical tools of data collection and analysis. Materials used in this study are comprised of interview guides, field notes jotted down during interviews, education policy documents and other relevant reports, narratives of transcribed interviews and one digitally recorded FGD video including a copy of the Zambian Education Act of 2011. To some extent, the compilation of all these materials reflect how the criterion of reliability was adhered to in this study.

## Chapter 7: Data Processing and Presentation

---

Building on the discussion from the methodology, this Chapter presents a synthesis of how raw data from taped interviews, FGD and analysis policy documents were organized and processed into ‘thematic narratives’, which later served as the basis for data analysis and discussion of findings. This procedure was undertaken in order to take stock of how the conclusions were finally drawn. The process of data analysis and discussion of findings ought to be seen as an integral part of the research design beginning from data collection itself to the analysis. Therefore, this is already an analytical endeavor which can simply be described as “writing theoretical memos”<sup>35</sup>.

This chapter is divided into five parts. The first three parts provide theoretical and practical details about how transcribing, data organization and coding were conducted before finally winding it up. The last two deal with the identification of themes and data presentation through the use of the mind map.

### 7.1 Data Processing Procedure

Although qualitative research design offers researchers the flexibility in data collection, there is no quick fix approach in data collection. Experience suggests that qualitative data collection techniques often degenerate into a messy business due to a mass of words gathered which need to be described and summarized accordingly. In the same way, statistical packages such as Stata, SAS, and SPSS are not an end in themselves. There are many ways of analyzing qualitative data, but whichever one applies, raw qualitative data must be systematically processed in a particular way. Due to the subjective and interpretive nature of qualitative research, researchers tend to favour a certain way of processing data although one can never be aloof from the process (Pope & May, 2000). In fact, by undertaking this processing, one is already involved in it. Nevertheless, there are certain universal steps for processing qualitative data. The main ones are transcribing, data organization and coding, identifying themes and data presentation.

---

<sup>35</sup> See Pidgeon and Henwood’s Chapter on Grounded Theory, in *Handbook of Data Analysis* edited by Bryman, Alan et al Chapter 28, pp.625-648.

## 7.2 Transcribing Interviews

Generally speaking, the use of qualitative methods involves transcribing raw data, which involves listening to recorded interviews and converting them into text. By neglecting issues of transcription, “the researcher’s road to hell becomes paved with transcripts [...] but once these have been made, they tend to be the *solid rock-bottom* empirical data of an interview project” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010:177). Arguably, one of the most laborious and daunting phases of this study was transcribing recorded interview conversations. The fact that there were 22 hours of recorded interviews along with the fact that I am not a very skilled typist, made transcribing extremely intimidating. Bernard and Ryan (2010) were spot on when they pointed out that;

“If you have 40 hours of recorded interviews, plan on working 8 hours a day, every day for 30 days to convert them into text files. But the real time may be several months [.....] And if you have 100 hours of recorded interviews..... you can imagine the problem” (p.49).

Transcribing interviews helped me to become familiar with the data through review of the field notes and also listening to the recorded interviews many times before finally writing up the notes. This was an enriching process which took me almost two and half months. The challenge was the demand of striving for objectivity while at the same time maintaining the authenticity of the data. Lacey and Luff (2001) argued that having a summary of recorded interview notes alone is not sufficient, unless conversations (words) are transcribed verbatim, without which a researcher is likely to bias the transcription by only including those statements that seem relevant or interesting to him or her.

In certain instances what respondents say and what they communicate through their body language and laughter are two totally different things. Therefore, when faced with these mixed signals, the interviewer (listener) has to decide whether or not to believe in those contradictory verbal or nonverbal messages. Given the significance of non-verbal cues which characterize the recorded interviews, wherever possible, signals like “*well.....er.....I suppose*”, which many respondents unconsciously made, were jotted down considering that there was a message behind them.

### 7.3 Data Organization

Considering that transcribing is a means and not an end itself, qualitative data needs to be organized so that it is easily accessible when coding. Presentation and analysis begin at a later stage. This procedure, however, varies considerably among qualitative researchers depending on the scope and nature of the data collected and the practical considerations at play. Although advancements in information technology have made it much easier to organise and analyse qualitative data using software packages such as CAQDAS, many researchers still apply the traditional way of working with qualitative data. This is due to potential risks associated with such tools replacing the human capacity to organize and think through the data themselves (Baugh et al., 2010).

Data collected at different levels (national, district, school) were systematically organized and coded in such a way that each transcribed interview file was given a number and date for identification purposes. Given the importance of linking '*pseudonyms*' and code numbers to actual respondents, a confidential file was created having resolved not to disclose at any given point which informant said what during interviews. This file had to be kept secure but earmarked for deleting upon the official approval of the thesis. Bryman (2008) puts emphasis on the principle of protecting the anonymity of participants, which implies that confidentiality must be safeguarded in all instances of research communication, i.e. electronically, verbally or written. This also includes maintaining the anonymity of informants, and time and location where an individual was being interviewed. In line with Bryman's assertion, names and other suggestive materials leading to the identification of informants were removed from the transcripts. This, however, resulted in the challenge of having to stressfully figure out the context of each file at the point of coding.

Often times, qualitative researchers face difficulties with locating texts to their original research context. Since no computer software package was applied in this study, a choice regarding the unit of analysis had to be made. This meant inductively deciding whether to number each word, line, sentence or paragraph. In the end, narrative data from respective transcribed files were numbered using key phrases and/or paragraphs. By so doing, each unit of text which was to be used during data presentation and analysis was easily traceable to their original context. However, there was an added cost in terms of purchasing extra

electric gadgets for safe keeping of processed files. In the end, this procedure proved useful in terms of avoiding the loss of data.

## 7.4 Data Coding Process

Why coding in the first place? Qualitative research generates extensive interview data (texts) which, although appealing to look at, do not necessarily help the researcher to understand the phenomena or context under scrutiny and how informants view it, unless such data are systematically analysed to illuminate the prevailing reality (Bosit, 2003). Coding is helpful because without it, it is difficult for a researcher to condense qualitative data into meaningful structures or segments which makes the analysis and interpretation not only doable, but worthwhile. There are many ways of coding qualitative data. This makes it possible for one to use whichever is suitable or a combination.

Although the use of computer software packages is on the increase, many researchers still rely on the traditional ways of coding. This involves subdividing data and assigning categories in form of tags or labels so as to assign units of meaning for the descriptive data collected during fieldwork (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this study, the rationale for coding was to identify relevant phenomena, to gather narrative illustrations about those phenomena, and to examine them to see similarities and differences as well as contextual patterns.

A combination of two coding techniques was applied to this study. To begin with, coding was done by '*cutting and pasting*' transcribed data into preliminary defined themes and categories. Given the secured back-up files, cutting and pasting (sorting) literally involved cutting off only those key phrases or expressions (quotes) regarded by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as "exemplars" and then pasting them onto a new file which was comprised of respective codes and themes for particular units of analysis. Colour coding was also applied by highlighting, and in some cases underlining, the overarching themes. Note that the transcribed data were suitable for relatively straight forward and pragmatic analyses as guided by the principles of narrative analysis and grounded theory<sup>36</sup> (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Hence, it was possible to highlight as many codes as possible.

---

<sup>36</sup> See PP. 247-265 as originally cited from in Glaser & Strauss (1967).

But like any other research procedure, coding of this kind is not without its own obstacles. The challenge was encountered in instances where a particular junk of text or phrases were coded using more than one colour, which was confusing. The good thing is that there was no need of cutting and pasting (re-sorting) the text units since they still remained within the same ‘unit text-context’ which worked out advantageously. Based on this experience, it was learned that coding is as critical as any aspect of data collection or analysis because it made it possible to construct the hierarchical order of conceptual themes, which were suitable for data analysis and discussion of finding.

## 7.5 Identification of Themes

“...but unless themes are discovered in the first place, no data analysis can take place” (Bernard & Ryan; 2010:71)

It is indeed difficult to go very far with data presentation and analysis if the emerging issues from the transcribed and coded data are not well categorized into theoretical themes (Lacey & Luff, 2001). In a qualitative case study, such as this, where raw data was collected using interviews, the processes described above tend to culminate into a number of theoretical ideas – thus the basis on which themes or concepts emerge.

The fact that there were pre-determined concepts (refer to Section 5.2 of Chapter 5) in line with the research questions (see chapter 1), did not in itself negate the process of exhaustively exploring the data to search for new themes. In fact, what is the point of collecting data if one does not intend to identify as many themes as possible until the point of saturation - where no more new themes emerge? By applying what Bernard and Ryan referred to as the “versatile technique of cutting and sorting important phrases”<sup>37</sup>, coded expressions were re-arranged both under main themes and sub-themes, which laid the foundation for presentation or displaying of the data

It has been argued that “no single set of categories (themes) are waiting to be easily discovered out there (Dey, 1993:110). But then again, how would it be possible for anyone to be convinced that the themes identified in this study were valid? In dealing with these issues, two things come to the fore. In the first instance, the process of searching for repetitions, similarities and differences, transitions and linguistic connectors or metaphors that occurred frequently in the texts was critical in the identification of key themes, but

---

<sup>37</sup> Refer to pages 71-75 from Bernard & Ryan’s (2010) Book on “Analyzing Qualitative Data”.

above all helped to secure validity and reliability of the data. It was, for instance, interesting to note that certain verbal expressions by respondents at DEBs level were similar to those expressed by informants at school and national level. To some extent the validation of transcribed texts within and across themes was fostered. Given on the one hand, that I took both the narrative analysis and ‘grounded theory’ approaches<sup>38</sup>, it became critical on the other, to ensure that all the emerging themes were generated from the transcribed data themselves. These themes, as mentioned earlier, were incorporated with the pre-determined theoretical ideas and concepts which were discussed in the literature review and theoretical framework.

## 7.6 Data Presentation and Display

If there is a point where one would feel almost stranded with qualitative data, it is at the stage of data presentation. The task of putting different pieces of data together is such a mammoth. Without total commitment and encouragement, completion of the project can take longer than expected. Unlike statistical analysis, there are regrettably few analytical tools available to facilitate this process in qualitative research. Rather, much depends on the researcher’s own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with creative presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations (Yin, 1984; Bryman, 2008).

Being a novice, I enjoyed the flexibility of having to tease out different data presentation recipes hoping to find a suitable tool for producing sound analytical results. In the end, the decision to apply the technique of “*mind maps*”<sup>39</sup> coined by Tony Bussan in his book entitled “The Mind Map Book” of 1995, turned out worthwhile. Mind maps, it has been argued, are one of the versatile analytical tools for semantic presentation of research findings - which entail the graphic presentation of ‘data branches’ between main concepts and ideas which are related to the central theme (Jonassen et al. 1993). In fact,

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, PP. 247-270

<sup>39</sup> In the same way concept mapping techniques such as *conceptual maps*, *visual metaphors* and *causal loop diagrams* (Eppler, 2006; Millen, 1997), are used as complementary tools for knowledge generation and sharing in social sciences, Tony Bussan’s mind maps are a potential analytical tool which can be applied extensively in qualitative research. Being a powerful analytical tool, mind maps unlock a researcher’s mind in the sense that they among other things help to “*crystallise research data*” of a given social phenomena by radiating those key theme/data categories of the main subject from the central theme in form of branches thereby making it easy to visualize, analyse and interpret qualitative research data. For more information, refer to the 2006 online article by Martin Eppler, which can be accessed on [www.palgrave-journals.com/ivs](http://www.palgrave-journals.com/ivs).



“It is in those shimmering and incessant embraces that the infinite patterns, the infinite Maps of the Mind, are created, nurtured and grown. Radiant Thinking reflects your internal structure and processes. The Mind Map (Concept Map) is your external mirror of your own radiant thinking and allows you to access this vast thinking powerhouse . . .”<sup>40</sup> (Buzan, 1993).

If used effectively, mind maps *can* aid researchers in presenting data in a much more summarized way thereby making data analysis easier. However, the process of data presentation is not in isolation from what the researcher already knows or thinks about the research topic. It seems, therefore, that what a researcher “knows” about a given research theme is merely brain (mind) memory, meaning that when one comes across a new concept during data collection, the understanding of that concept may have a bearing on other memories already in one’s mind. Arguably, how memories are interlinked in an individual mind is that individual’s scope of knowledge (Jonassen et al., 1993). Nevertheless, semantic presentation approaches such as mind maps, are critical in relaying a researcher’s scope of knowledge on a given research theme to the wider audience.

Guided by the principles of mind maps, data was graphically presented in a such a way that the main ‘research theme’ was placed at the center of the map and connected around it were ‘main concepts’(or data categories) which, through the use of lines, linked to fragmented data ideas. Differentiating these lines or branches by colours showed the relationship between the main categories and specific ideas of data from the field. The process of making those ‘branches of ideas’ entailed fragmenting the data which de-contextualised the different data sets that were indicative of informants’ experiences and views. At the expense of losing the original meaning, the objective of this technique was to present data in a way that made the research data comprehensible.

Real research is never entirely inductive or entirely deductive. Hence in most qualitative research designs, “a mix of inductive and deductive approach is applied” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010: 265). In this study, different branches of data were crystalised around each concept/category which in itself meant an inductive-deductive process. At this point, it was possible to delineate the wider branches (i.e. accountability, institutional capacity and local autonomy) from “educational decentralization”, which was the central theme under investigation. In their controversial debate, Glaser and Strauss (1967), referred to these

---

<sup>40</sup> Cited from a journal article by Ray McAleese (1998:251): The Knowledge Arena as an Extension to the Concept Map: Reflection in Action, Interactive Learning Environments, 6:3, and 251-272. Article can be accessed online from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1076/iee.6.3.251.3602>

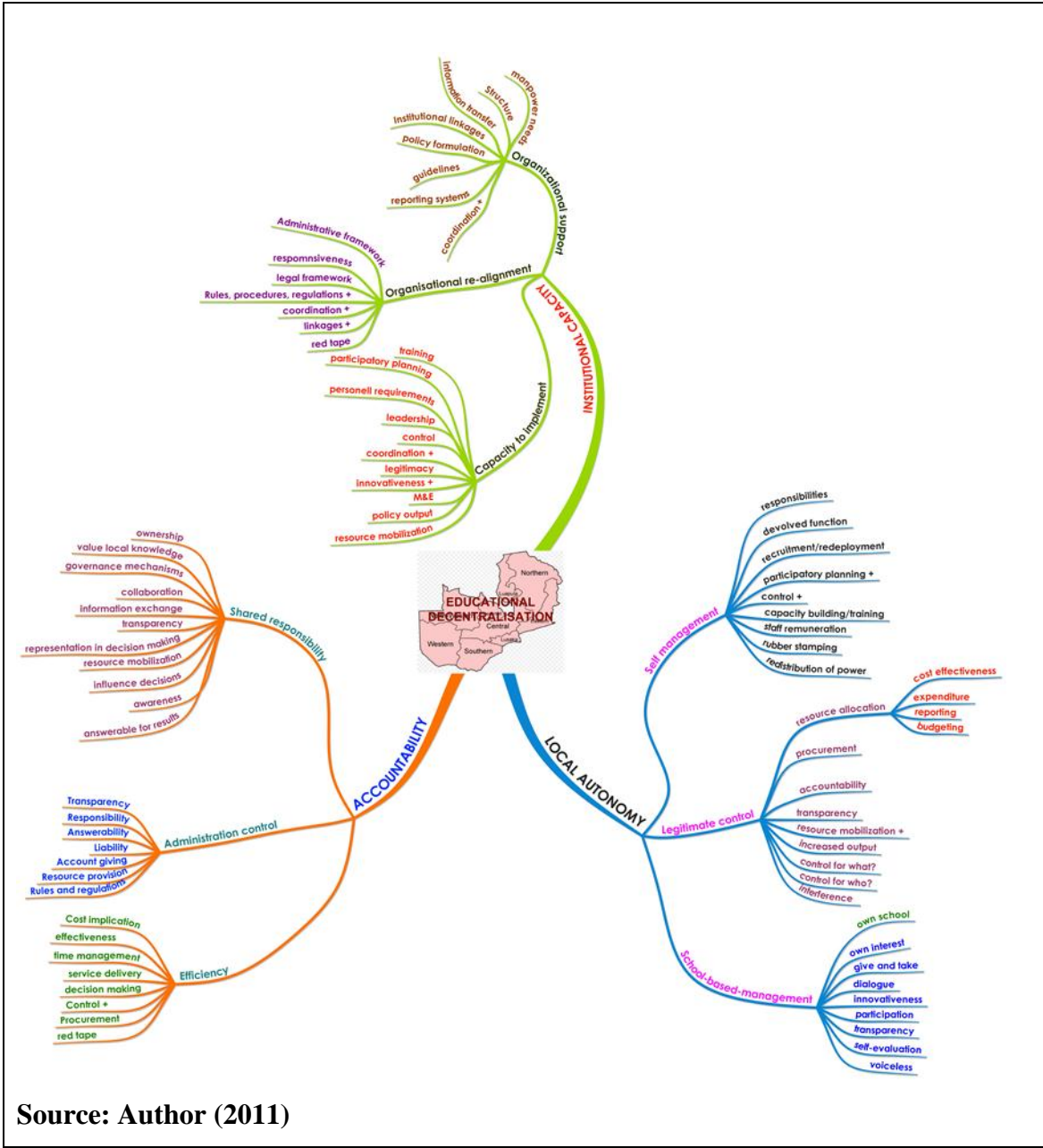
‘wider branches’ as phenomena/context, in that they broadly emerge from concepts and data categories. In this study, these phenomenon were seen as thicker branches (concepts) to which thinner ones (data categories) were linked.

The use of case study designs is often characterised by a high degree of internal cohesion of data categories (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Yin, 2009). Hence it was practical to find certain branches of data around more than one main (concept) branch. In the final analysis, this resulted in unique data patterns inductively put together, leaving those new branches of data integrated in their original form, thereby ending up with a broader map. The map below does not explicitly delineate the relationship between these branches and data categories – an aspect to be dealt with in the analysis and discussion chapter. What is clear is that certain data branches repeatedly emerge (marked with the symbol +) because of their tendency to behave in a more “coherent” way. The reason being that organization of data, coding, including the process of making themes, was inductively induced adding that the theme “educational decentralization” at the center constituted branches which extended across all the key concepts of the map.

Presenting data in this way provides an explicit framework for certain data branches (categories) to emerge separately from grouped ones, which in a way challenge the rationale for the use of mind maps. Yet, going by other sources of literature regarding the design of such maps, the dichotomy between grouped data categories and those that stand alone within the map appear less important (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009).

The figure below is therefore a ‘mind map’ in which “educational decentralization” is the ‘*central image*’ representing the research topic. Connected to it are its thicker ‘*organic branches*’, i.e. accountability, institutional capacity and local autonomy radiating from the center of the research topic distinguished by different colours, ending up with *thinner branches* of data containing detailed information. By and large, the generic presentation of the data in this figure below implicitly denotes the raw data from the field representing respondents’ views, experiences and opinions regarding educational decentralization in general and how institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy in particular affect implementation of the policy in Chongwe and Solwezi districts.

Figure 9: A Mind Map Presentation of Summarised Data



Source: Author (2011)

## **Chapter 8: Data Analysis and Findings**

---

Following the presentation of how data was organized and displayed, effort will now be devoted towards data analysis and discussion of key findings. The presentation unfolds with the analysis of the data themselves. Guided by the three themes of the study (i.e. institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy), data analysis goes into detail by examining the findings under each sub theme in relation to research questions in chapter one. The chapter ends with the discussion of the findings. The objective here is to try and interpret what the findings mean, not only in the narrow sense of answering the research questions, but also their implications on the wider assumptions about educational decentralization.

### **8.1 Institutional Capacity**

The Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) is fully committed towards achieving the Education for All Goals. Hence, educational decentralization under MoE is seen as a vehicle through which access to and quality of education could be improved. Most critical was the need to accelerate access to basic education, given the huge backlog in enrolment since the early 1990s. Notwithstanding the limitations in institutional capacity, District Education Boards (DEBs) were established in order to implement the policy. In addressing this challenge, GRZ made attempts towards enhancing DEBs's capacity by addressing problems pertaining to planning and financial management, including personnel and infrastructural related needs (MoE, 2003). Considering insufficient support to the DEBs as well as low levels of desirable results so far, how then do we make sense of 'institutional capacity' in as far as effective implementation of educational decentralization is concerned? Below, the theme of institutional capacity and findings pertaining to it are analysed under the three sub themes: organizational support, organizational realignment and capacity to implement.

#### **8.1.1 Organizational Support**

Questions pertaining to this sub-theme reviewed a number of issues regarding the operations of education boards, not only as discussed at national level, but also as debated at the district and school levels. Respondents generally reported that the question of

organizational support to education boards was one of the leading concerns at the local level. Concerns of personnel capabilities, structural and operations guidelines in particular, have increased since implementation commenced. Over 70% of the 23 respondents at national and district level described coordination and information transfer as peripheral concerns which nonetheless need attention. The basis of their claims was that since the adoption of the policy in 2000, the MoE had put in place a number of policy measures aimed at addressing organizational related challenges, but there has been no political will to adequately implement these. Three respondents said the following:

**Respondent** (nat. level): *“We are not aloof to the organizational challenges facing district education boards countrywide. This is why we decided to put in place policy measures to address them but whether they are working or not is difficult to tell”*<sup>41</sup>.

**Interviewer:** *Why do you have that impression?*

**Respondent:** *“there are still gaps in implementation. You don’t need to be told because you will hear for yourself when you get to the districts that the organizational capacity of some of these boards is not up to scratch. There are a number of factors but the most critical ones in my view are lack of skilled manpower, unclear policy guidelines and poor coordination”*.

**Respondent** (Chongwe) *“....but there are still setbacks concerning the implementation of educational decentralization.... and government still has a lot to do when it comes to strengthening institutional capacity at the district level. There are ambiguities surrounding operational guidelines which affect decision making and coordination of activities. If MoE does not effectively re-organise these boards by streamlining coordination and structural mechanisms, this whole idea of district education boards will end up a white elephant”*<sup>42</sup>.

**Respondent** (Solwezi): *“This district is so large but unfortunately we are not well organised as a board-which makes it difficult to plan and coordinate. Education is very important therefore a policy such as decentralization ought to facilitate for continued management and administrative support. Moreover, most of these people in our board have no experience about how things should be done. They are used to the old system where central government did everything. You don’t just establish boards and expect that everything will be fine”*<sup>43</sup>.

As much as educational decentralization may have stimulated tremendous enthusiasm among local level stakeholders, the above sentiments reflect an array of deep seated discontents regarding the operations of education boards. Given that certain aspects of organizational support, such as reporting systems, appeared to receive relatively low attention, how do we then explain the divergent views between those concerns that dominate popular discussions, such as weak organizational linkages, and those that were voiced out by respondents? Partly, it may be due to the fact that some of these concerns lend themselves more readily to popular stakeholder debate at the local level, than others. Nonetheless, issues such as coordination and manpower needs, which seemingly receive maximum attention, are

---

<sup>41</sup> MoE1/05.09.10/Edu/dec (for details on this quote, refer to the interview reference guide on Appendix xx)

<sup>42</sup> DEB#1/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

<sup>43</sup> DEB#4/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

primarily of greater concern in peri-urban based education boards than in urban ones like Solwezi. Interestingly, certain aspects of organizational support, like communication and information exchange, despite being relatively of low concern, are not so much of a challenge to Chongwe, which is close to the capital – an indication that proximity to the capital might be a factor which affects implementation. But on the other hand, boards in peri-urban areas like Chongwe seem to have more acute concerns than their counterparts in the urban location. However, the data collected shows that structural and operational impediments are perceived to be universal.

Many studies confirm the pivotal role which organizational support mechanisms play in facilitating the achievement of positive results by intermediate institutions in a decentralized education system (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Since their inception, education boards in Zambia have undergone major changes – a key feature which has necessitated reorganization towards a more devolved but specialized system of well-functioning boards. Therefore, what level of organizational support do education boards need in order to be more effective? This question seeks for answers to the concerns raised by respondents. While transferring responsibilities and power to the districts has positive implications, this practice can be counterproductive where devolved responsibilities are not accompanied by appropriate organizational support mechanisms such as personnel and financial resources (First Global Report, 2007). Therefore, concerns by respondents are legitimate. Indeed, the need for organizational support for Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs is one of the most rational ways of making these boards work more effective in implementing the policy.

### **8.1.2 Organizational Realignment**

The question of organizational realignment has attracted significant attention since implementation commenced. The term organization realignment is here used in the broader sense of necessary institutional capacities and frameworks which support effective functioning of the boards. Findings under this sub theme provide evidence of the status of the operational frameworks under which education decentralization is being implemented. The majority of the respondents<sup>44</sup> were generally of the view that as much as transparency and accountability in decision making have somewhat improved, it would be naive to

---

<sup>44</sup> Specifically, this general view refers to the 23 respondents from national and district level since they are the one who deals with policy matters of such nature as organisational realignments.

conclude that things get done the way they are officially expected. Despite mixed responses, over 80% of the 23 informants were quite familiar with the challenges associated with non-organizational realignment of the boards. Talk of a weak administrative system and the absence of legal framework surfaced many times during interviews. For example, one of the respondents from Chongwe DEB lamented that:

*“We have the administrative framework but it is weak.....besides where is the legal framework to support implementation of the policy in districts? Though with good intentions, you cannot establish boards like we have done in this country without strengthening the administrative framework. Remember also that no matter well-articulated your policy objectives can be, implementation can be hampered if there is no legal framework - this is one of the biggest problems we are experience. If education is a right, why not develop stronger regulatory framework to facilitate its provision?”<sup>45</sup>*

Similar sentiments were also echoed by another respondent in Solwezi who vehemently stated that:

*“No one can boast about transparency or administrative efficiency in our board...at least not in absolute terms. Many times decisions are made haphazardly. Senior officials from Lusaka often flock here to query us why this and that is not being done. If at all there are laid down administrative procedures, then they are not adhered to. I wonder why? At times those of us from the governance side voice out certain concerns but mostly these are not taken up by management. Unfortunately we can't do anything because we have no leeway to do that.....we may have teeth but we can't bite. Maybe if we brought on board sufficient funding that would be different? But in my view the challenge is beyond what we experience: it's a question of a regulatory framework which if it is there then it is not working at all”<sup>46</sup>*

Interestingly, one respondent at national level drew sharp contrasting views by saying that:

*“Yes, there is need to realign institutions at district level to promote efficiency but government is very cautious in its approach. Educational decentralization as you know is by stages which are a building process. Most of these districts and communities like Mufumbwe are highly poverty stricken. Therefore, it may not be beneficial to put in place a regulatory framework which completely supplants government's role in education provision. Though education is a right ...government is cautious about putting in place a strong legal framework as that may create stress on the system given limited resources”<sup>47</sup>.*

The above quotes encapsulate something of an opportunity as well as a blurred dilemma faced by Chongwe and Solwezi boards. Does realignment of these boards imply moving into a dangerous territory? Considering the sentiments raised, the need to realign the administrative framework, as well as to formulate a legal framework, seems hard to resist. In fact, who could be in opposition to prospects for greater administrative efficiency, transparency and loosening of bureaucratic controls at the district level? One can argue that, for both management and governance team members in these two boards, including PTA members and policy makers at national level, the rationale of organizational

---

<sup>45</sup> DEB#1/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec ( refer to the interview reference guide)

<sup>46</sup> DEB#3/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

<sup>47</sup> NLI2/10.09.10/Edu/dec

realignment is an attractive prospect. But what about organizational realignment in a decentralized education system is problematic? There are many contentious issues, but the main concern might be the complexity of regulatory frameworks and challenges associated with the degree of the transferred responsibilities and the scope of organizational realignment desirable when authority is genuinely devolved. Findings on this sub theme point to the manner in which duties and functions of board members are constituted in the *Zambian Education Act* - the source of the problem. As stipulated in the current act, for example, functions of the Provincial Education Officer (PEO) are clearly outlined in relations to those of the DEB secretary while the same is not done for the education board chairperson. Hence, conflict in performance of responsibilities does occur. Florestal and Cooper (1997), argue that:

“It is important that any given legislation does not create conflict between administrators or conflict with the constitution or with other existing laws. In most cases educational reforms may not only require re-alignment or enactment of legislation specific to basic education but may also affect other laws. To determine what type of legislative framework must be formulated in a decentralized education system, one has to be aware of conflicts that may arise at different levels” (p.15)

Understandably, these views are primarily based on two sources of conflict. Individual rights and freedoms on the one hand, and the specific organizational arrangements regarding the provision of basic education on the other, are enshrined in constitutional acts and international human rights charters (Florestal & Cooper, 1997). By implication, policy inconsistencies or conflict between the objectives of educational decentralization and other laws of the land could potentially emerge. Looking at the respondents’ concerns, it worries then to imagine that such perceived conflict could become a major puzzle against realigning the organizational and regulatory framework for Chongwe and Solwezi boards. Yet, if such sources of conflict are questionable, are there alternatives?

Policy rhetoric seems to portray attempts towards strengthening administrative and formulating legal framework in a decentralized educational system as a complex endeavor. However, reality points to interesting experiences where such measures have been implemented without serious implications (Ghai & Regan, 1993). There are many other cases to cite. In New Zealand, for example, educational decentralization brought about legal changes which involved a review of the Public Finance Act, and also the education provision guidelines, including the provision of new legal authority to the Education Review Office (Florestal & Cooper, 1997). Similarly, the transformation of the political



system which was experienced in Eastern Europe, necessitated radical changes in which educational decentralization involved the enactment of education Acts as well as amendments to laws governing local government, taxes, elections and so on (Florestal & Cooper, 1997). With regard to this study, the key message is that weak organizational alignment may be one of the main obstacles which can hinder effective implementation in these districts, if not dealt with.

### **8.1.3 Capacity to Implement**

“Scholars of policy implementation repeatedly argue that implementation problems should be considered when policies are being made. Better policies would result, we are told, if policy makers think about ahead of time whether and how their policies would be implemented before they settle on particular course of action” (Elmore, 1980:601).

Elmore seems to be spot on in highlighting how thoughts of forward mapping provide useful insights on policy and practice. The research questions pertaining to the board’s capacity to implement, received more overwhelming responses than any other. Almost all respondents confirmed that education boards faced serious challenges in implementing the educational decentralization policy. Although less than 10 % of the 23 respondents cited certain positive outcomes, more than 80% of them stated that DEBs have limited capacity. This explains why the implementation has not yielded good results. A myriad of problems were pinpointed, but those of greatest concern are the lack of adequate funding and inadequate skilled personnel to live up to the new demands in planning (decision making), monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Though respondents considered lack of funding the most critical, the ideal scenario is to have all needs effectively addressed. Given the meager resources, it is critical to rationally prioritise how to deal with such challenges. But that does not in any way imply neglecting those perceived as less crucial since it is possible that they may be equally culminated into an insurmountable problem against implementation.

These findings show that the Chongwe and Solwezi boards’ capacity to implement is questionable. As expected, respondents gave mixed views about what they thought was the root cause of the problems. Opposing views ranged from lack of political will on the part of government, to poor leadership in the boards, and generally low level of desire by communities to meaningfully participate in the provision of basic education. The question of the capacity to implement was, however, perceived differently by participants at school

level. While the majority of the discussants in the 4 focus group discussions (FGDs) saw the establishment of boards as a positive mechanism aimed at promoting community participation, a few lamented on the failure by boards to tackle problems in schools, such as delays in teacher recruitment, low learning achievement and poor supply of educational materials. A participant in one of the group discussions had this to say:

*“We know what the board here in Chongwe is supposed to do to support our schools but do they? The Board is expected to address most of the problems we face because they are close to us but they have challenges. We also know that board members are expected to fundraise in order to raise additional income for educational activities in the district but in a poor community like ours, how much can they raise? Besides, the caliber of certain board members leaves much to be desired. Some of them either do not know what they are supposed to do or don’t understand operational guidelines at all. How do you for example, get a teacher of English from a basic school and appoint him to be a district planner surely? In all this, much of the blame is on MoE headquarters because that is where most of the decisions are made.”<sup>48</sup>*

If there are board members with inadequate or no professional experience, then it is obvious they would lack the necessary expertise to execute their duties. Therefore, the objective for improved education service delivery can be expected to be centered on building the professional capacity just as much as on financial needs. Considering the far-reaching implications globalization has had in limiting central government’s involvement in education provision (Stewart, 1996; Carnoy, 1999), is it not absurd that government should be blamed for non-performance of these two boards? Is it also reasonable for boards and communities to seize the opportunity, having been given the powers to manage education affairs at the local level as they see fit? One possible explanation to these questions and findings in general, might be that the implementation of the educational decentralization policy requires incremental changes to meet different circumstances. Therefore, it might be experiences in the districts studied which prompted the respondents to perceive that the boards were given too great responsibility too suddenly and that they could have coped better with more incremental change.

## **8.2 Accountability: To Who, Why, and How?**

Arising from a key research question concerning accountability, follow up questions emerged during the interview. Informants further commented upon how, and to whom, they thought the district education boards (DEBs) were accountable.

---

<sup>48</sup> PTA#1/09/10/Edu/dec

In theory, DEBs must be accountable to their constituencies for (a) the improvement of educational access, equity, relevance and quality and (b) the improvement of the performance of the education system in service delivery (MoE & SNV, 2008). Nonetheless, the picture painted by respondents at national and district level including participants in the FGDs, was generally that the board does not have discretion over such decisions. In practice, Chongwe and Solwezi boards report to MoE headquarters through the PEO's office on almost all issues pertaining to the provision of basic education except on peripheral matters, such as monitoring of education standards in schools.

Nearly all the 23 respondents at national and district level sounded optimistic about the benefits of educational decentralization. Close to 50% of them remained skeptical about the perceived successes achieved. Their shared views were on the basis that decentralization entails strengthening accountability mechanisms for transparency and inclusiveness in decision making and performance of responsibilities. About 70% of the 23 informants reported that through decentralization, accountability in decision making has often been accompanied by other actions that have contributed towards increased access to education. The ideas of shared responsibility, improved administrative functioning and efficiency in the use of resources might be seen as the contributing factors. This is an indication of the compatibility between the 'voice/client power' and 'management relationships' explained in the conceptual framework of this study.

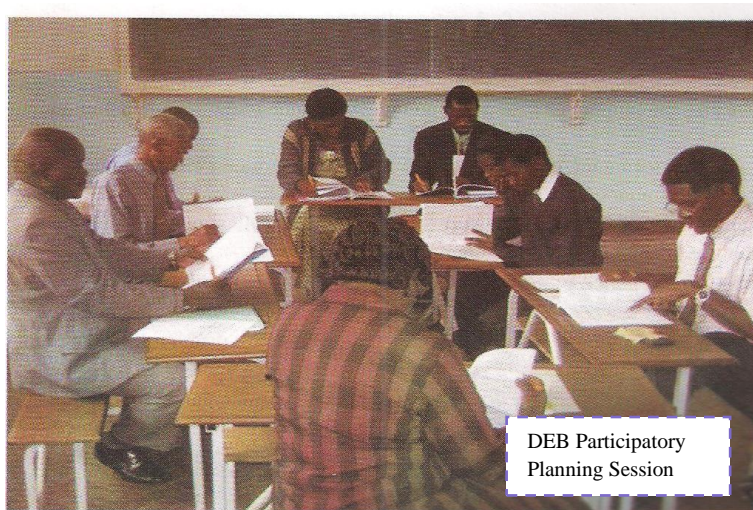
### **8.2.1 Shared Responsibility**

Insights offered under this sub theme are rich and plentiful. Some of the follow up questions brought to the fore the notion of 'shared responsibility', which respondents felt had a bearing in shaping the nature of accountability relationships at the local level. Further, the data collected generally revealed a strong sense of 'collective action' and 'ownership', which was underpinned by the value of local knowledge and answerability for results which were characterized by apparent structural and administrative disconnects within the setup of the board. Respondents across the two districts unanimously regarded the board as a venue for collective responsibility through which they had been able to influence certain decisions, but most importantly accelerate the constructing of teacher houses and additional classrooms which led to increased pupil enrollments. During one of the interview sessions, a board member in Solwezi put it this way:

*“..We know what is required of us all in this board. All schools in this district are ours but if we don’t tackle their problems who will do it? It is not like before when somebody from Lusaka came and told you what to do. Since we know the problems our children face in these schools, **we meet as a team to discuss ways of addressing them.** This is why when it comes to constructing classroom blocks and teacher’s houses for instance we are all united as a board including parents who contribute upfront materials. The main challenge however, is that we are still answerable to Headquarters and our decisions often questioned even though communities are expected to be judges our works<sup>49</sup>”*

These sentiments are in line with the figure below which provides evidence on how education boards operate as a team – i.e. participatory planning approach. This approach demonstrates a perceived sense of shared responsibility for both management and governance members of the board.

**Figure 10: Demonstration of Shared Responsibility through Participatory Planning<sup>50</sup>**



Source: (MOE & SNV, 2008: 8)

Contrary to the views and evidence presented above, about 25% of the 23 participants expressed reservations on the viability of collective action. They felt that although their unity of purpose contributed in enhancing awareness and transparency towards what they termed as “representative decision making”, it did not wholesomely reflect the full extent of the reality. Some were quick in citing formally established controls as the limiting factor for collective freedom to deliver success. These sentiments were also highlighted by discussants across the four group discussions held in Chongwe and Solwezi. In reference to the puzzle surrounding the perceived sense of shared responsibility, one discussant lamented:

---

<sup>49</sup> DEB#4/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

<sup>50</sup> See section 2.6.3 of chapter 2 of this thesis, page 22, for more details regarding the composition of the board and how members work as a team.

*“Even if we are represented in the board as PTA members, there is not so much to show for it at our level. Participation in board meetings is one thing but seeing to it that necessary resources are in place to undertake agreed upon activities is another. Some of these board members are just there for allowances in the name of working together, not that there is anything meaningful they are doing. Of course there may be minutes showing that they share ideas but then what else? If you look at the reports and statistics you will notice poor pupil performance and stagnating quality of education. If government is always to blame, then why are these boards there in the first place? Personally, I don’t understand why it is like that may be you people who are so educated have answers”<sup>51</sup>.*

However elaborate these views may be, they are complex to interpret. But one key thing can be made clear out of them. Although the accountability relationships in a decentralized education system are by and large interdependent (Florestal & Cooper, 1997), collective actions within the board are generally compromised since the government, the giver of authority, takes it away from the boards at the same time. The lack of accountability to primary beneficiaries (teachers, parents, pupils) may also entail that boards operate in an uneven playing field so that management team members override suggestions put across by those appointed to the board on the governance side. The rationale for collective action might also be compromised by the fact that although the DEB Secretary and PEO are professionals, they still operate under intense political pressure from above, which in itself negates downward accountability.

## **8.2.2 Administrative Control**

In line with the national policy, educational decentralization in Zambia has implied increasing “local control” through deregulation of government duties. This has been done through granting administrative, legal and financial powers to DEBs to enable them to make decisions concerning educational matters (MoE, 1996). Surprisingly, this study revealed that top officials still exert supervisory control over boards. Driving the decentralization objective is the view that increased flexibility at the local level allows decisions to be made much quicker in response to local needs than those made at the top (Hanson, 1997).

Interestingly, data from the two districts where this study was conducted indicate that both Chongwe and Solwezi struggle in executing their responsibilities due to excessive administrative control from the center. On paper, boards have been entrusted with administrative responsibilities and discretion to administer education delivery as they see it fit. It emerged, however, during interviews that the boards do not in practice, possess the ultimate authority on planning and implementing. In theory, however, authority can be

---

<sup>51</sup> PTA#4/09/10/Edu/dec

divided. Arguably, the exercise of authority by DEBs may be limited by constraints on what they can do, and also by constraints on resource flows from the center. Again, views that different actors have of such constraints may be influenced by their interest in evading responsibility for their own shortcomings. One way to defend themselves can be to point the blame elsewhere (e.g., interference from above), rather than to accept their own limited capacity or effort.

One of the questions in the interview sessions helped to discover the extent to which DEBs are able to administer basic education under minimum or no supervision. Nearly all respondents at national and district level echoed similar sentiments that while it was not entirely a bad idea for MoE headquarters to administratively monitor the operations of the board, monitoring could become excessive. The result of this is that members of the board are left with little or no room to maneuver administratively. The following sentiments were captured from one of the planners at MoE headquarters in Lusaka.

**Respondent:** *“My dear, I have nothing to hide! We have had challenges but so far so good. Much of the successes so far, relate to the fact that there are laid down rules and regulations which education boards follow. You see.....all these documents on my table are reports showing that boards are accountable and answerable on what they do. We monitor them regularly which helps to control and guide them in areas where they face administrative challenges”.*

**Interviewer:** *You sound as if Boards don't have the power to decide what to do without your involvement, do they?*

**Respondent:** *“I do not mean control in the negative sense but remember that decentralization is a gradual process. There is no way therefore, central government would have established these boards without having a say on how they are administering education. The fact that government is a source of funding even justifies its direct involvement”<sup>52</sup>.*

Meanwhile, the district education board chairperson for Solwezi had this to say;

*“For what I know supervision or control measures need to have a limit but if they go beyond that, it defeats the whole essence of having created education boards because you cannot promote accountability and transparency in that way. It's same as in the past when central government ran the show at all levels. I have served this board for over 3 years now and it's difficult to appreciate the working relationship between our board and people from headquarters. If they have the final say in all administrative matters in this board, then why are we here?”<sup>53</sup>*

These expressions point to a significant concern which demands deeper reflection. From my vantage point, the degree of administrative control over local units influences the level of success or failure in a decentralized system. It also underlines the classical challenge where administrative responsibilities are transferred but devoid of necessary power and authority to execute them. The question to ponder on, therefore, is can central government totally

---

<sup>52</sup> MoE1/05.09.10/Edu/dec

<sup>53</sup> DEB#4/10/10/Edu/dec

disengage itself from education provision at the local level? This question is mind boggling yet there is no clear cut answer because educational decentralization by definition and more so in practice, does not necessarily mean that boards can be absolutely independent. In other words, central government which established them can at any given point decide to do away with them if the objectives for which they were created for are unachievable.

### 8.2.3 The Rationale for Efficiency

Other than the rationale for community involvement and enhancement of accountability, one of the objectives for educational decentralization in Zambia was on financial grounds - i.e. efficiency promotion (MoE, 1996). The basis was that decisions would be made quicker and closer to the point of delivery, or at the community level where actions are taken. This objective is backed by the argument that where micro educational issues are handled by geographically and culturally distant technocrats in an education system, operational costs are often high (Winkler, 1994; Winkler & Yeo, 2007).

Findings from the field, however, revealed otherwise, as all respondents reacted differently. Generally, lack of tangible positive results seemingly outweighed perceived successes. During interview sessions with selected policy makers, it came to my attention that in certain instances there were exaggerations of facts concerning efficiency related successes. For example, more than 70% of the 23 respondents referred to a number of efficiency related factors perceived to be widening the gap between policy and practice. In an interview session at MoE headquarters, one senior policy maker had this to say:

*“If decisions are made by the people themselves who know their problems efficiency increases. This is the case now. So we have ample time to concentrate on policy matters. Because of the Boards, issues of operational nature such as management of teachers’ payroll are exclusively done at the district level. That is just one of the good lessons. Previously you would have to go to provinces, districts and even right up to the schools to collect information for planning purposes....Imagine how high the budget line for operational costs was?”<sup>54</sup>*

Contrary to the above sentiments, one of the members of the education board in Chongwe district plainly remarked:

*“The problem in this country is that you have policies which are well written but when it comes to implementation, it’s something else. Even if we are not technocrats, we are able to point out some of the weaknesses. Many responsibilities have been transferred to us as Boards but unfortunately issues like districts annual budgets and work plans are still approved from Lusaka and often it takes too long. You can imagine! Even simple decision such as purchasing of educational materials is also suctioned from there. Besides, there is never a month passing without officials from Lusaka coming here to monitor as*

---

<sup>54</sup> MoE1/05.09.10/Edu/dec

*if we can't do that. Sometimes, our colleagues from the management team are called on short notice even on minor issues such taking information on how any books are needed for the district. Surely? Now tell me Amos, how can you lower administrative costs or improve efficiency for that matter? ”<sup>55</sup>*

Clearly, the views expressed above contradict each other, making objective analysis of the reality difficult. Interestingly, however, one female teacher in Chongwe was fully supported by other members during the group discussion when she explained that:

*“As much as the PEO and other officers from Lusaka are fond of making frequency visits to districts and schools, so too are DEB officials who often travel to Lusaka, and as we understand, for meetings which never end. Just think about it, the money which they use to burn fuel could be used to buy books and chalk for the poor school children. Please come to my office after this meeting so that you can see for yourselves the boxes of chalk procured from Lusaka without consulting us. Up to now, none of us has ever used that chalk because it can't right on the blackboard no matter how hard you press it. We had to use money from our pockets to buy what we are using now. Imagine! ”<sup>56</sup>*

If decentralization is meant to improve efficiency by bringing decision making closer to primary beneficiaries, then these sentiments point to the contrary. Obviously, there are many factors at play. One of them being that the objective for central control over local agencies overrides the efficiency rationale, although popular local interests do not necessarily hinder efficiency as such. These findings are consistent with the implied view of decentralization as discussed under the literature review chapter. Except in weak or failed state formations (federations, confederations), the government retains the ultimate authority to intervene, either by legislative or budgetary means, and sometimes by more direct ad hoc measures. What matters is the clarity of administrative responsibilities – an issue which has been highlighted under the analysis of organizational realignment.

### **8.3 Local Autonomy: Freedom or striking a balance?**

Having analysed the data and findings under the theme of accountability, the focus will now be on local autonomy. The establishment of education boards in Zambia was a highly attractive venture. It is almost inconceivable that anyone could have opposed the rationale for greater autonomy of the boards and the flexibility for independent decision making at the local level, given the inefficiencies which characterized the centralized system of education in the late 1980s. But history is full of highly and effective centralized education systems in the greater majority of developing countries (Naidoo, 2002; UNESCO, 2005). For example, Kaunda's strong socialist ideals demonstrate the pivotal role played by the state in education provision. Mcinerney (2003) argues that “for officials at the district and PTA level, the

---

<sup>55</sup> DEB#4/10/10/Edu/dec

<sup>56</sup> PTA#3/09/10/Edu/dec



opportunity for greater community participation, empowerment and local control is a fascinating possibility” (p.58). Is it, therefore, a matter of freedom, or striking a balance in authority relationships between the center and local units? This question is important because it relates to one of the key questions which sort to find out how the transferred responsibilities and authority have influenced the autonomy of DEBs.

Data indicates that members of the boards, including PTAs, are enthusiastic about the authority and responsibilities received from headquarters which have stimulated flexibility in decision making in the implementation of the policy. Nonetheless, it emerged during interviews that regardless of the low level of balance between local autonomy and accountability, boards have little or no control over most of the responsibilities transferred to them. In the following section, data shows how DEBs enjoy full support from top politicians and senior education policy makers in the MoE (in certain cases), yet junior officers are often less enthusiastic to let go of certain responsibilities due to perceived loss of power and other pecuniary privileges at their disposal. This supports the argument that since decentralization strategies are often formulated and adopted in the political arena, passive resistance from the center usually becomes a major obstacle (Mcinerney, 2010; Hanson, 1998). General findings presented here are backed by the evidence presented below.

### **8.3.1 Self-Management**

Self-management through education boards is one manifestation of the implementation of the educational decentralization policy in Zambia. Nearly 80% of the 23 respondents (i.e. national & district level) reported that while much can be improved, the transfer of responsibilities and authority to DEBs has led to a remarkable transformation in the way basic education is delivered at the local level compared to the past. The logic behind their claims is based on the devolution of educational functions which has made the provision of basic education more effective. This is because DEBs, in collaboration with communities, are now the decision makers. However, they are still under minimum supervision though with intense control from the center. The board chairperson for Chongwe referred to this problem in the following way:

*“No one needs to be told about how central government influences the affairs of education board. I think it is not necessarily about intervening but interference. The problem many people do not seem to understand is the conflicting roles between board officials and certain officers at HQ. If the adoption of a given policy strips you of your responsibilities and power, won’t you feel threatened for the fact that*

*the authority you once possessed is now exercised by your subordinate? Naturally you would. In my opinion, that is precisely where problems affecting implementation of the policy lie”<sup>57</sup>.*

Over 70 % of the 23 respondents said that barely less than a half of the decisions made by education boards are taken under full autonomy of the DEB, and mainly within the framework of the management guidelines set up and overseen by a MoE HQ. However, in an apparent expression of the enthusiasm for self-management, a junior board member from the management team in Solwezi disclosed that:

*“I wonder if there is anyone who wants to return to the old system where only top officials from MoE in Lusaka managed things – and were regarded as the only one with power and authority to manage what went on in districts and schools even when they did not understand problems there. In line with this policy, we should be seen working together by upholding the principles of self-governing. It is not good to have a few big individuals in the board as well as those from Lusaka running the show while the rest of us watch and rubber stamp what they decide upon. We do experience that....and it is very frustrating especially for junior officers like me”<sup>58</sup>*

Based on these findings (data), self-management can be a viable option for promoting and safeguarding the autonomy of DEBs and can lead to effective and efficient delivery of education at the lower level. Nonetheless, criticism of those in management positions must be tolerated when discussing issues of education (Caldwell, 2008). This means, members of the board, PTA members and central government all have a say on how well basic education should be provided. Sadly, the quest for power by the local units often becomes what Caldwell refers to as the autonomy “tail that wags the education dog” (Ibid: 34).

### **8.3.2 Legitimate Control**

Data under this sub-theme were analysed in terms of the “balance of power” between the management and governance team members and how their relationship affects the autonomy of the board as a whole. The research questions here sought to locate the loci for power in the board and the implications associated with that. Views from members of the two boards suggest that although governance team members are in accordance to the policy guidelines the policy making body, it was rather management team members who exerted more influence on almost all policy decisions. Ideally, it should have been the other way round if not a win-win scenario. Here is what the DEB secretary for Chongwe said:

*“I don’t mean to sound egoistic but in reality, it would be an understatement to suggest that the board chairperson or indeed the governance team as whole wields more power than the office I am occupying*

---

<sup>57</sup> DEB#1/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

<sup>58</sup> DEB#3/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

*together with my team here. It might be due to a lack of a legal framework....but I also think it would have been a different ball game if governance team members did not come on board empty handed”<sup>59</sup>.*

These sentiments were largely confirmed by the Board chairperson in Solwezi who reported that:

*“This is the second term I am serving in this board having worked for the MoE for 27 years before. There are few instances where you table an idea as governance body and it is well taken up by the entire Board. But many are the times we are not listened to no matter how excellent the ideas we propose during board meetings may be. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do about that because we have no power to sanction our colleagues - the management, who feel superior over us. Based on my experiences, it is this challenge which has contributed to lack of tangible success in the implementation of decentralization”<sup>60</sup>.*

It is, however, based on the data from policy documents and on my own work experience that Boards are currently enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy, more so than before. The fact that both Chongwe and Solwezi boards exercise legitimate control over certain decisions such as teacher payroll management, recruitment and redeployment, is in itself a testimony that the implementation of the educational decentralization policy is slowly but surely yielding success. Even more encouraging as noted by key informants, is that boards are gradually becoming proactive in their own limited capacities. They no longer passively wait for orders from Lusaka but are actively involved in administering basic education, although not yet to the extent expected of them.

The views cited above however, point to a crucial challenge which concerns the Board’s legitimate control and local autonomy over the delivery of education at the local level. Theoretically, governance and management team members are expected to work harmoniously together but there are power imbalances triggered by conflict of interest. In the end, it is the management team which as explained by one teacher at Chalimbana basic school in Chongwe which “illegitimately” bulldozes its way out of most decisions made. For instance, issues of budgets, procurements plans and reporting are monthly presided over by management and often without the knowledge of governance team members.

Consider that the management team constitutes MoE employees subject to the ministry’s “chain of command” through the formal line of authority, communication, and responsibility. How tenable is it therefore that education boards have the legitimate power let alone autonomy to make decisions over education delivery at the grassroots level? One would argue that, the authority which Chongwe and Solwezi boards are perceived to have is

---

<sup>59</sup> DEB#1/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

<sup>60</sup> DEB#3/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

merely symbolic in nature. The fact that there is little consensus or no checks and balances between the two camps demonstrates something questionable about whether or not authority was meaningfully transferred. This situation appears to hamper local accountability in decision-making as well as transparency which can only be served when these two groups keep an eye on each other's actions.

### **8.3.3 School Based Management (SBM)**

SBM (through PTAs) is one of the concepts central in the implementation of decentralization in Zambia. Thus, the question of DEBs' autonomy and how that relates to responsibilities and power from the top has a direct bearing on the operations of schools since that is where policies are translated into actions. It is in fact, perceived in the policy that "by entrusting greater power and authority to education and school managers at district and school levels respectively, in addition to promoting community participation lead to a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for these units" (MoE,1996:127). Hence it was logical for this study to explore the experiences by PTA members in as far as the implementation of the policy is concerned.

Based on the 4 group discussions conducted with PTA members, it generally emerged that despite lack of technical capacity and inadequate funding, PTAs have a strong sense of ownership and responsibility towards education. A female parent in one of the two group discussions in Solwezi described the involvement of community members in managing the affairs of school as having led to improvements in education delivery. She cited among other things, increased dialogue and transparency as some of the contributing factors adding that everyone feels "it is their own school". She added that since parents through the PTA make contributions in terms of upfront materials, they have the right to 'voice out' if something goes wrong. These views were repeatedly echoed by the school Head teacher who had this to say:

*"I have been the head for this school for over 10 years and looking at the way we are work as PTA members now there is a big difference compared to the past. Before it was difficult to tell communities to contribute something even if it is for a noble course and nobody cared so much about the condition of the school and plight of pupils. Everybody knew it was the duty of government to [.....] and no wonder vandalism was rampant. But things have changed. All these new classroom blocks you can see here are simply because PTA members worked hand in hand with the community to build them including making some of the desks pupils sit on. So even if this school belongs to government, we are the owners because we have contributed so*

*much to making it what it is today. I can tell you one thing! If you have put an effort into making something, you will mostly likely take care of it and mostly protect it against vandalism”<sup>61</sup>.*

If PTAs and the community can effectively sustain their involvement in education as seen above, then it is probable that they can make good contributions towards the achievement of the goals of decentralization in Zambia. However, most of the discussants felt that this perceived sense of responsibility and ownership was unfortunately not backed by necessary school based discretion in decision making since even minor issues such procurement of school requisites needed approval from the DEB’s office, a process which was time consuming. Decisions taken by school managers in consultation with other members of the PTA were found to be relatively rare. Seemingly out of frustration of this challenge, Mumena Basic School PTA Chairperson lamented as follows:

*“The school records show that enrollment numbers are increasing year by year but we do not have adequate classroom places to accommodate every child from these surrounding villages. We have done all we can with the community to try and build two additional classroom blocks...see those molded blocks outside! They have been there for over 5 months and the rains will soon start. It is so annoying that we have to wait for officials from the PEO and DEBs’ offices just to come and survey where the building should be built on”<sup>62</sup>.*

These findings point to one key message that although SBM is appealing in decentralized education system, as observed by Mcinerney (2010), school managers and communities may not, in all circumstances possess the authority, technical ‘know-how’ and resources to efficiently deal with challenges faced by the school. A Venezuelan minister of education illustrated this point when he spoke to a gathering of educators about his frustrations in trying to decentralize the educational system in the 1970s:

“Let us say that the decisions that are taken at the level of the minister are worth 100 points, but when they are implemented at the next lower level [director-general] they are reduced to 80 points, and at the level of area directors, 60 points. They leave the Ministry of Education and when implemented at the regional level are worth 50 points, at the zonal level are worth 25 points, and by the time they get to the schools not enough is left of the decisions to change what has been going on for the past 15 or 20 years” (Peñalver, 1976:23 cited from Hanson, 1989:117).

Certainly, even if devolution of responsibilities and authority as well as autonomy at school level seem logical in a decentralized system, “there may be risks involved with driving schools into unknown territories” (Mcinerney, 2003:70). Such perceived risks are however not generalizable since contexts differ. Besides there are many avenues which can help to

---

<sup>61</sup> PTA#2/09/10/Edu/dec

<sup>62</sup> PTA#1/09/10/Edu/dec

map out fairly decentralized pathways through which SBM can complements policy efforts at district or regional level.

## **8.4 Major Differences and Similarities.**

This study compared the implementation of educational decentralization between Chongwe and Solwezi education boards. Doing research in settings with slightly different contexts has its own strengths and limitations not least of which is that data can be distorted by comparable differences and similarities between the cases under examination (Bray, et.,al, 2007). Of course, this is a standard argument against generalizing from micro qualitative case studies. But, on the other hand, one has an opportunity to get closer to how people reason and perceive particular social phenomena.

Other than the distinction about the contextual settings, the major difference pertaining to the findings from the two districts had to do with the leadership styles which had a major influence in the effectiveness of the board. Judging from the views by members of the boards as well as minutes of the full board meetings, it was clear that Solwezi board was well organized than Chongwe. Compared to Chongwe where the “full board” was almost nonexistent, the leadership style in Solwezi was encouraging. Besides claims by respondents, the official minutes in Solwezi were proof that both the DEB Secretary and the Chairperson were working hand in hand in organizing and coordinating full board meetings as well as making follow ups on agreed upon activities. To a large extent, this was not the case in Chongwe where one of the board members expressed his frustration as follows:

*“Imagine that since the beginning of this year (2010), we have never held a full board meeting...God now what is going on! ...and if you call the Board chairperson, he will have no idea about what is going on. Now tell me, how can you deliver as a board like that?”*

At whatever level in an education system, leadership is undoubtedly critical. A study on education boards in Papua New Guinea concluded that the success of any education board largely depends on three factors: “the leadership of the principal, the leadership of the chairperson, and of course the quality of members of the Board” (Maha, 1997:190). Elsewhere, the leadership role of the managers and that of the Chairperson were equally considered critical for the smooth functioning of the education boards (Peterson et al. 1995; Deller, 1995). Thus, the leadership role of the DEB Secretary and the Board

Chairperson (in both Chongwe and Solwezi) in making decisions that foster a sense of direction for all members, is pivotal not only for the well-functioning of the board but also towards effective implementation of the policy.

However significant the above distinction may be, this study revealed striking similarities regarding implementation and its outcomes. Often, research does not turn out that way but given the “isomorphic nature” of the boards under study, the findings presented here are thus justified. It is of course possible to unearth differences between two comparable cases such as these. But the fact that Chongwe and Solwezi districts are at the same level in the system and facing similar challenges; that they operate under the same policy guidelines and its officials are influenced by the same environment; that they are saving similar clientele may among other factors justify the similarities in this study. Therefore, the table below is a comparative summary of key findings presented within the framework of the key research themes and concepts as informed by the research questions in chapter 1.

**Table 2: A Comparative Summary of Main Findings**

Main theme	Data Category	Chongwe DEB (Site 1)	Solwezi DEB (Site2)
Local Autonomy	Legitimate control	Insufficient decision making- powers. Top officials from MoE Headquarters still interfere with the management affairs at district level, to the contrary.	Low level balance between autonomy and accountability because board members have little leeway in decision making and use of resources. Board members do not have the ultimate power and authority to make certain key decisions especially on finance.
	Self-management	Considerable degree of devolved functions and power to support implementation of the policy. Board members seem to know what to do but lack of authority to be able to do things effectively is a thorny challenge. Highly ensusiasitic board members when it comes to participatory planning but this is hampered by excessive control by central government reflecting insignificant devolution of functions.	Despite this considerable degree of devolved functions, it was found out that real power and authority in the board is exercised by only few strong individuals thus compromising transparency and accountability in decision making.

---

	<i>School based management</i>	Strong sense of responsibility, commitment, and transparency in running the affairs of schools by PTA members, reflecting sufficient degree of devolved functions and authority. But this not backed by adequate capacity and resources.	Strong sense of responsibility, commitment and transparency by PTA members. Diminishing sense of apathy in participation by some stakeholders at school level who still feel it is the responsibility of government to provide basic education
<b>Accountability</b>	Shared responsibility	Perceived collective actions on matters of basic education by board members and other external stakeholders enhanced by representative decision making, transparency and sense of ownership for outcomes	Just as in Chongwe, this perceived collective responsibility mirrors a serious puzzle of how board members are squarely answerable for their actions/decisions not only as full board but on their individual capacities as well.
	Administrative control	Excessive control from the top resulting into lapses in internal control mechanisms within the board. As such, education board officials follow administrative procedures, rules and regulations ambiguously and often in an adhoc manner.	Undesirable administrative pressures from the top resulting into inconsistencies in the manner officials in the board apply admin control measures. This underlies deep seated misconceptions about decentralisation policy by board members
	Efficiency	Contrary to the policy, the objective to increase administrative efficiency in the delivery of education services is still rhetoric. Their lack of knowledge about the level of aggregation on how the available resources are allocated and more so utilized in the board but also generally within decentralized system	No comparable differences between the two education boards. The replication of this educational decentralisation model by MOE is proving extremely inefficient.
<b>Institutional capacity</b>	Organisational support	More often than not, education board experiences many challenges such as inadequate funding, weak institutional linkages, and manpower needs and other	No significant differences although it emerged that Chongwe DEB which in a peri-urban area has more

---



		structural impediments but the support rendered does not much up.	teething problems than Solwezi.
		Policy under implementation without full assessment of resource needs.	
		Weak administrative framework.	
Organisational realignment		No legal framework to re-align operations of board members in executing decisions for delivering basic education services.	Weak administrative framework and lack of legal framework hamper accountability and transparency. This scenario makes it difficult for board members in these boards to execute devolved functions and responsibilities in an efficient and effective way.
		Lack of a legal framework is a source of frustration among governance members who have no option to seek recourse on arbitrary decisions by management which they are not happy with.	
Capacity implement	to	Although education boards possess a great potential to achieve success in making educational decentralisation policy an alternate for centralisation, there is a gap in implementation and that gap is lack of capacity of the board.	No comparable differences
		Operational manuals have been have made available for board members, but there is lack of a sustained mechanism to put them into effective use.	

**Source: Author**

Note: For additional details of these findings please refer to the sections for data analysis and findings above.

## **8.5 Discussion of Findings**

Following the analysis, the interpretation of findings then follows. The discussion is guided by the three analytical questions on the basis of which the summary, the conclusions and the recommendations are drawn from.

### **8.5.1 How does institutional capacity affect the implementation of educational decentralization?**

Studies have also shown that where institutional capacity is weak, chances of implementation failures are higher than in settings with relatively stronger institutional capacity. This is because in the latter decentralisation policies and practice can be more easily implemented (Hanson, 1989). Hanson's study produced results which highlighted institutional capacity as one of the influential factors affecting the operations of district education boards. Understandably, Chongwe and Solwezi education boards have not been able to function as expected or produce desirable policy outcomes due to their weak institutional capacities.

The challenges pertaining to organisational support, manpower and funding inadequacies, poor coordination, unclear rules and regulations, lack of strong regulatory framework among others explain the low level of success of decentralization policies in these two districts. Although these factors seem to be interlinked, they are independent of each other making them hard to interpret although they do to a large extent, influence policy implementation. While a good policy does not necessarily guarantee success, experiences from Chongwe and Solwezi suggest that good practice cannot as well be guaranteed amid organisational weaknesses or the absence of necessary institutional mechanisms that are required for effective implementation.

Most educational decentralization policy initiatives have not been achieved due to inadequate institutional arrangements. By and large, the depth and density of organisational capabilities determines the extent to which devolved units can be far away from the centre (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Therefore, compared to New Zealand and Norway (two interesting cases reviewed in chapter 4), it is clear that the gap between "policy and practice" in terms of institutional capacities in both Chongwe and Solwezi districts is wide. Besides the educational decentralization policy making process which

appears faulty in Zambia, lessons from these two districts point to lack of sufficient political commitment to be able to anticipate beforehand, the challenges of implementation. Besides, problems pertaining to weak institutional capacity such as manpower and funding requirements, poor coordination and lack of a strong regulatory framework are not new. In fact, they existed in Zambia way before decentralisation was conceived. For instance, inadequate skilled personnel and funding for regional units were challenges previously just as they have resurfaced under decentralisation. Why should we then be surprised by the low performance of these two boards when the “known” problems pertaining to institutional capacity were not adequately dealt with from the onset? The answer is simple. As Hanson (1998) pointed out, sub-national structures inherited from central government in much of the SSA region are administratively weak, highly politicized and mostly characterised by corrupt practices - obstacles which are hard to deal with in a devolved system.

Further, there is a strong view by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and IMF that greater decentralization leads to the mobilization of resources to support implementation which otherwise might not be generated under centralization (Weiler 1990; Gershberg & Winkler, 2003). A question can be asked: if DEBs are to be made responsible for mobilising their own funds to finance basic education, what sources are made available to them? Suppose they are accorded powers to tax? That may not be a magic bullet besides it is unlikely that the tax base in each district could yield sufficient revenues for implementation decentralisation activities. Interestingly, a case against the World Bank and IMF’s high profile argument about resource mobilisation was made by the Solwezi Board Chairperson who had this to air:

*“Imagine! If Solwezi Board which is right in the Provincial Capital where economic activities are booming is unable to raise additional funds, what more Chavuma Board which is right in outskirts with higher level of poverty? You won’t believe it if I tell you that from the time this Board was established, no single coin has ever been raised despite attempts to fundraise. I wonder what would have happened if it was not for funding from central government. But it is not just funding alone. Highly qualified people mostly prefer to work in Lusaka and other big cities, so we end up with half-baked and non performing personnel here. Basically, our capacity to implement is simply weak!”<sup>63</sup>*

Indeed, some regions in a decentralised system may be small and wealthy while others large and poor- a variation which can affect resource mobilisation for implementation. Thus, the sheer geographical size as well as the degree of poverty between Chongwe and Solwezi explains why implementation is in jeopardy. Apart from debunking the World

---

<sup>63</sup> DEB#1/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

Bank and IMF's position, the expression by the Solwezi Board Chairperson is a prediction of a simplistic decentralized educational system with distinctly weak institutional capacity. Even though 'weak institutional capacity' is not the only factor pointing to lack of meaningful results, we can speculate that meaningful improvement may take very long for in both districts since what is arguably at stake are trials and errors – that is the attempts to make new structures work adequately.

### **8.5.2 How does accountability influence success or constrain the implementation of the educational decentralization policy?**

Notwithstanding seriousness exhibited at national level in 2002 towards decentralising the education system, crippling barriers to implementation soon became apparent. Although good lessons are not well documented, this study revealed that the mechanisms put in place through the decentralisation policy, have without doubt transformed accountability in the district level. Clarity and awareness of 'roles and responsibilities' of board members has fairly improved and positively contributed towards effective planning, monitoring and evaluation and reporting (MoE & SNV, 2009). But on their own, clarity and awareness of policy guidelines do not mean much especially when one considers the incompatible accountability relationships which characterises Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs- thus internal and external.

The evidential basis for discussing the question at hand is based on the key finding that although theoretically an ideal, the issue of accountability for both Chongwe and Solwezi Boards still remains a difficult puzzle to solve. From the policy perspective, educational decentralisation is seen as a way of strengthening accountability relationships for enhancing transparency and inclusiveness in decision making, including actual execution of educational responsibilities. However the overwhelming discontent by participants indicates that the perceived accountability successes are questionable if not far-fetched. In fact, most actions aimed at promoting shared *responsibility* and instituting *administrative control* and *efficiency* at the district and school level, are practically lacking- thus stifling good policy intentions. Besides, the questionable experiences about accountability in these two districts have far-reaching implications on the idea of shared responsibility just as well on administrative control and efficiency in a decentralised education system.

Paradoxically, the transfer of decision making authority to lower units in a decentralised education system does not however lead improved accountability at all times in every setting. You can have great devolution of control all the way down to the grass root level, but only to entrench local corruption. The US provides a historical case of a sharp reaction during the 1900 against local political control of schools in New York City on the grounds that it served and entrenched corrupt practices (Katz, 1975). But granted on the other hand that “the centre improves the process of decentralisation or if local structures have inadequate capacity to implement, then shared responsibility may enhance efficiency and consistency” (Florestad & Cooper, 1997:7).

Note however, that “accountability mechanisms are not just limited to a collective relationship towards a particular course of action, but rather, stakeholders’ voice relationships are as much, critical in influencing policies and decisions at various levels in a decentralised education system”<sup>64</sup> (Di Gropello, 2004). Hence, be it weak or strong sense of collective action, as long as there exists a lopsided relationship such as in Chongwe and Solwezi where the only significant aspect of shared responsibility is about the construction of classroom blocks and teachers’ houses, then accountability is questionable. But on the other hand, accountability may be a precondition for transparency which is crucial where financial resources have been mobilised for a particular course of action. In this case, school infrastructure and anything that involves procurement of some kind, may be considered a key issue of transparency. A female board member in Chongwe was spot on when she disclosed that:

*“One of the challenges in this Board is lack of transparency and consultation when making decisions. Many are the times you are invited to participate in activities you never had a say upon [.....] It is the same problem affecting PTAs in Basic schools. Parents are only involved when it is time to contribute upfront materials for constructing school buildings. You just get a feeling that you are being sidelined! You wonder why? So why should everybody be squarely answerable for things not presided over as a team?”*<sup>65</sup>

In cases like this, it is hard to imagine how accountability through shared responsibility can be enhanced. If educational decentralisation is a process, so are accountability and its associated elements. Granted on the one hand that accountability entails answerability, it is

---

<sup>64</sup> Refer to Di Gropello, (Ibid:1-8) where he elaborated in detail that through the “long route”, clients as citizens (or community) influence policy-makers and policy-makers, in turn, influence providers (i.e. both the “compact” and “voice” relationships are part of the “long route”). Through the “short route”, citizens, acting as final users/clients of the service, influence more directly the providers (this is the “client power” relationship).

<sup>65</sup> DEB#4/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

logical that “shared responsibility” be it at the district or school level equally is perceived as a process where inclusion of all stakeholders as opposed to their exclusion, should be upheld. Linked to the issue of administrative control is the efficiency rationale both of which, as findings show constrain the operations of Chongwe and Solwezi boards. Questions can be asked: Why is it that even after decentralisation, administrative controls over devolved structures are still imposed from the centre? Doesn’t that defeat the policy objective of improving efficiency by bringing decisions closer to the people?

While these questions are mind boggling, an argument in favour of a balanced system (i.e. centralisation + decentralisation) can be advanced. Obviously, in a highly centralised education system such as Zambia was prior to educational decentralisation, loosening controls meant disentangling the centre from heavy administrative responsibilities which in the end improves efficiency in the delivery of education services. But as findings in this study have shown, things don’t easily turn out that way because of perceived challenges. If indeed, as often the case in SSA region that “decentralisation offloads challenges and hardships to local units – i.e. a win-lose case scenario, as opposed to transferring positive opportunities” (Hanson, 1998; Weiler, 1993), it is therefore justifiable for MoE HQ to put in place considerable “control measures” which can be considered as a win-win situation – since chances of successful implementation may then be higher.

It has also been argued that where sub-regional units are inexperienced or appear to be failing to execute newly allotted responsibilities which seems to be the case for Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs, then it is according to Florestad and Cooper (1997) understandable for central authority to override their powers. However, there are other practices of decentralization policies particularly in the Scandinavia where decentralisation has been seen more and more of a governance strategy for achieving rationalisation and efficiency (Karlsen, 2010:527). The argument there has been that the reins of bureaucratic controls could be replaced since local authorities and individual schools had the necessary competences to utilise provided resources in a more flexible and efficient way. But of course, there may be critics who see weaknesses of this.

### **8.5.3 In which way does the transfer of responsibilities and power influence local autonomy of education boards?**

If in theory the answer towards effective implementation of educational decentralisation in Zambia lies in the autonomy of education boards, then what is the question? The discussion about local autonomy is as old as the notion of decentralisation itself. Some scholars are of the view that autonomy, and not the absence of it, is what is most ideal in a decentralised system (Mcinerney, 2010). In fact, the dichotomy between these two perspectives features prominently in the debate about educational decentralisation. Other than laying emphasis on the transfer of responsibilities and power to the established boards, educational decentralisation in Zambia equally entailed according these entities with a certain degree of autonomy in order to enable them to make independent decisions in the best interest of the communities (MoE, 1996). Of course, this is advantageous in many ways such as enhancement of self-management by the board. Further, there is also a link between local autonomy and increased effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of education services which in the long run widens the platform for community participation and good governance (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983; Ellerman, 2004). This assertion goes well with the remarks by one Board member in Solwezi who said:

*“Even if we don’t have powers to make final decisions, our presence during board meetings matters a lot as it gives us an opportunity to influence such the process of decision making. For instance, we do, in our limited capacity, have a say on the budget, we participate in joint monitoring activities to schools which helps us to understand problems faced better[....]It is easy and less costly to monitor schools since we are closer to them than people from headquarters in Lusaka”<sup>66</sup>*

These views paint a ‘somewhat’ impressive picture about the freedom being enjoyed by members of the board. But to greater extent findings of this study suggest that education boards as well as PTAs have little or no room to manoeuvre when it comes to making key decisions over most of the responsibilities transferred to them. This problem is also compounded by the conflictual relationship at the district level between the management and governance members in the boards. This conflict of interest as the study revealed, is based on the reality that the management team members’ exert more influence in the affairs of the board than their counterparts. Under such circumstances, you end up with a lopsided accountability system with no checks and balances - merely symbolic of a

---

<sup>66</sup> DEB#4/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec

decentralised system but in practice devoid of balanced legitimate control and autonomy to stimulate innovativeness.

But then again, regardless of how much responsibilities and authority can be transferred DEBs, local autonomy alone is not enough. Smyth (1993) questioned the hype surrounding the idea of autonomy of local units in a decentralised system. He argued that “contrary to policy rhetoric on participatory democracy and autonomy, the reality or practice is that power and authority are retained at the centre” (p.4). Linked to this claim was what appeared as a stern warning by a Planner at the MoE headquarters who had this to say:

*“You don’t have to decentralise anyhow just for the sake of it. Do you really think educational decentralisation is risk free? I totally disagree because giving too many powers to DEBs can have serious consequences in future. Don’t ask me about a concrete example because I have none but one of the potential dangers about decentralizing a national educational system like we have done in this country is the likelihood that certain local entities may attempt to subvert the system by going their own way”.*<sup>67</sup>

Clearly, the transfer of educational responsibilities and authority from the top has far-reaching implications for the autonomy of the boards just as much as it compromises the flexibility for decision making freedom by PTA members. Findings in this study are intriguing. Just how much authority is required to ensure that education boards or PTAs for that matter have the necessary flexibility for participatory decision making? This question is hard because there is no well-known perfect model decentralisation. Angus (1994) argued that “it is difficult to make a case that regional education officials have greater freedom and authority to make decisions which are truly responsive to their own setting” (p.16). Angus’ raises counter argument against those who advocate for decentralization on the basis of the liberal and populist localism traditions, in which, the idea public choice, individual’s freedoms and popular power are paramount in ensuring effective and efficient education service delivery at the local level. For this reason, both Chongwe and Solwezi boards might well be seen as agents of central government which are accountable for their actions in implementing the mandated policies and as such, expected to comply with MoE’s externally-driven reforms and regulations.

---

<sup>67</sup> MoE1/05.09.10/Edu/dec



## **Chapter 9: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

---

“Educational decentralization is a popular reform theme of governments around the world, but with its goals, strategies and outcomes that are as different as the countries themselves” (Hanson, 1998:111).

In view of the above assertion, this chapter sums up the main issues discussed in this thesis. It is divided into three parts. The first provides a summary of issues discussed under chapter 1 to 7. The second part presents conclusions based on data analysis and discussion of main findings in chapter 8. The last part outlines recommendations and the way forward.

### **9.1 Summing up**

The overall goal of this study was to analyse educational decentralisation policy in Zambia in terms of the perceived gap between policy and practice or implementation. In particular, three factors thus; institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy were examined in order to see how they affect implementation of the policy. The study took a comparative approach in which two cases thus Chongwe and Solwezi District Education Boards (DEBs) were explored in detail. By focusing on institutional capacity, accountability relationships and local autonomy, the objective was to assess how these factors influence successes of these boards and on the other hand the extent to which they constrain the implementation of the policy. Guided by the aim of the study in chapter one, this thesis sought to answer three key research questions namely:

1. How does institutional capacity influence success or constrain effective implementation of educational decentralization?
2. How does accountability in a devolved education system affect the implementation of decentralization?
3. In which way does the transfer of power and/or authority or lack of these aspects affect local autonomy of education boards?

The initial build up to these questions is chapter 2, which provides a contextual background on the development of Zambia's education system and the genesis of decentralisation reforms - on which the educational decentralisation policy is anchored. The chapter highlights a number of issues of which the key ones are the policy objectives including the new district governance structure and related fiscal measures designed to support implementation.

The third chapter explores the nature and scope of decentralisation. It highlights on the historical trends of decentralisation. The chapter shades more light on the different forms of decentralisation. But more importantly, it presents the arguments for decentralisation coupled with an analysis of mechanisms under which is it often applied such as school based management. The substantial limitations of educational decentralisation were highlighted: thus its lack of a strong theoretical tradition. This critique was explored further in chapter 4 where the empirical inconsistencies of decentralisation as espoused at international, national and regional levels were discussed.

Essentially, the literature review in chapter four identified and discussed different models adopted in selected parts of the world. Based on the evidence assessed, success related factors were highlighted. The key message arising from the literature reviewed is that one of the most critical determinants of success or failure of educational decentralisation in a given context is the manner in which accountability relationships and institutional arrangements for autonomy are established. However, effective functioning of devolved structures can as demonstrated in this study be a difficult and time consuming endeavour. It is no wonder Hanson's (1995) assertion that:

“Decentralization does not just come with the formulation and adoption of policies. Like most types of reform, it is built rather than created. It happens slowly because the accountability systems as well as the institutional culture (e.g., "the way we've always done things around here") must be transformed, new roles and skills learned, leadership styles altered (e.g., shifting from controlling to supporting behaviours), communication patterns reversed, planning and decision making procedures revised (e.g., bottom up and top down), and regional policies and programs developed” (p. 9).

Certainly, there are equally no pure versions of educational decentralization strategies in which sub national units have absolute administrative authority over their responsibilities. Hanson (1998:113) added that “almost all administrative decisions be they finance or personnel, in practical terms manifest degrees of centralisation and decentralisation – hence finding the suitable nexus is what matters most”. Chapter 5 consolidates on the

design of the study by formulating the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Theoretically, decentralisation is rooted in a theoretical tradition which may have a bearing on implementation. However, it is also more about conceptual definitions themselves which as discussed in this chapter informs the methodology in chapter 6 including data analysis and discussion of findings.

This study employed a comparative qualitative case study design involving Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs. The aim was to analyse implications of the comparable differences and similarities with regard to implementation. In terms of the targeted sample, these two boards were the focal point for the selection of respondents. However, other participants were also conveniently drawn from national and school level where Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held<sup>68</sup>. In this way, it was possible to triangulate data from semi-structured interviews, FGDs and use of official policy documents and reports. The data collected were organised and presented in Chapter 7 in form of a *mind map* under which three wider organic branches (themes) namely institutional capacity, accountability and local autonomy emerged from the central theme of the map, leading to thinner branches of data on which the analysis and discussion of findings were based.

## 9.2 Conclusions of key Findings

“If properly conducted, decentralisation is the best means of managing education efficiently. But it requires many sacrifices; it requires transparency, accountability, better training of implementers, good dissemination of information, etc.” (A school principal in Guinea: in Lugaz & De Grauwe, 2010: 139).

Although this was a comparative study of two districts, no significant differences in terms of implementation were noted. The reason might be that despite differences in proximity to the centre, geographical size and context, it is mainly the administrative systems; the constraints within which these boards operate; and social relationships at the local level whose impact on implementation is similar in both districts. This argument adds to the credibility of the findings as probably being more broadly representative than merely being unique to these two research sites. Therefore, the remarks below are meant to reflect on the findings and if possible to raise some new questions and possibly point to new insights on

---

<sup>68</sup> Note as indicated in the methodology and data analysis chapters, 23 (representing 76.6%) out of the targeted 30 participated were interviewed at the district level, while out of the targeted 10 key informants who were targeted at national level, 8 (representing 80%) were interviewed. Four FGD were conducted- 2 in Chongwe and two in Solwezi with attendance ranging between 7 to 10 participants in each of the four sessions. Close to 40 % of those who participated in the study were women.

the topic studied. The findings are however, mixed and may therefore appear to be a bit perplexing. In both research locations on the one hand, they give some grounds for optimism but on the other, they point to serious challenges in implementation of educational decentralisation policy in the two districts.

**On the ‘optimistic side’-** As stated in the analysis chapter, governance board members, PTA and community members appear to be highly enthusiastic and committed in playing their role as manifested by their contribution to basic education. Some of the board members even go as far as meeting certain running costs and spending their time for monitoring works in schools. Some teachers even use their own money to meet school requirements like chalk, duster boards etc. Obviously, this enthusiasm and commitment is indispensable for effective operations of schools and the DEBs. But how sustainable are such initiatives? Perhaps not in a long term but regardless...if some board and PTA members including the community show firm determination towards basic education provision, an enabling environment should be created to allow them play more important roles.

Yet, the balance of findings is such that grounds for pessimism outweigh the positive prospects in implementation. Findings confirm the principle argument in the introduction that institutional capacity, accountability and autonomy are critical success factors since both Chongwe and Solwezi generally showed major weaknesses on these aspects. Further, findings underscored the challenges associated with weak institutional capacity, weak accountability and weak autonomy in as far as the working of Chongwe and Solwezi DEBs is concerned.

***Weak institutional capacity:*** Findings revealed inadequate skilled personnel and financial resources including the absence of a strong administrative and legal framework. These factors lend themselves as crucial challenges in Chongwe just as much as they do in Solwezi. Not only do these problems manifest at the district level, they also frustrate actors at the school level where teachers and parents complain that decentralisation may worsen inequalities since not all communities can be able to mobilise local resources for education. Clearly, these hardships have made it difficult for DEBs to implement the policy. If anything, they are serving as a call for action. Note however, that manpower and financial needs as well as regulatory frameworks are not static problems. They can be mitigated by the action of national policy makers. Therefore, manpower capacity

enhancement, wider community involvement and indeed, enactment of a stronger and balanced regulatory framework are possible steps in that direction. It might also be useful to review institutional coordination mechanisms not only within the board but also between boards and MoE headquarters including PTAs in order to narrow the gap between national and lower level actors. But most important as well is the need to clarify their expected roles and responsibilities.

***Puzzling accountability system:*** The issue of accountability in this study also gives cause for great concern especially in light of the experiences pertaining to problems regarding shared responsibility, administrative control and efficiency. The poor internal and external compact relationships at the district level and the fragile nature of collective actions as well as irrational administrative controls towards the provision of basic education hamper the effective implementation of decentralization policy. As findings show, decisions concerning approval of budgets, allocation and use of funds are mostly made at MoE headquarters in Lusaka an indication that DEBs have little or no control of economic resources allocated by central government through MoE.

The persistence of such central control seems contrary to what was anticipated in the policy. Therefore, such tendencies compromise the very thing the establishment of DEBs in particular and educational decentralization in general is supposed to promote—increased accountability and transparency in decision making. The reason why local accountability in a decentralised education system often faces serious resistance from within the state apparatus may be due to the fact that it threatens existing power relations. Why this is so is indeed, a topic for further investigation. However, the weak accountability relationships characterised by both Chongwe and Solwezi may be mainly due to the absence of a strong regulatory framework. The absence of such a framework breeds and replicates the type of inefficiencies and sluggishness which existed during early 1990s when the government was highly centralised – thus confirming the principle argument raised in the introduction of this thesis.

***Inadequate autonomy:*** The main problem revealed under this category was lack of meaningful authority for decision-making towards implementation. This manifested in terms of excessive control over matters that were under the jurisdiction of the DEBs. Substantial responsibilities and power have quite well been formally transferred to the lower units but sadly, most key decisions are still made centrally. This situation has

perpetuated inefficiencies in decision-making just as they were under centralisation. Lack of autonomy by the DEBs may not necessarily be a negative factor given that certain decisions still have to be made centrally. However, expanded local autonomy is central to the very rationale of decentralisation. As the theory goes, “those who are close to the point of delivery are best able to make decisions and direct resources for the benefit of learners” (De Grauwe & Lugaz, 2010; 142).

The challenges highlighted above hinge on the debate by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank as to whether or not local autonomy can be combined with greater transparency. The argument often goes for authority adequately located locally, in order that those directly affected by these decisions can influence them which minimises abuse of authority- an important ingredient for of autonomy in a decentralised system. Budget tracking in Solwezi is a good case where delegated authority was jointly exercised by the board and external partners Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) which in a way is minimising the abuse of power over the allocated funds.

### **9.3 Recommendations**

Educational decentralisation is generally perceived as if it is an answer to problems of high centralisation when in actual fact, it is merely a management strategy which may be adopted when and where a highly centralised education system is ineffective and inefficient. In light of the challenges associated with institutional capacity, accountability and autonomy, the need for flexibility during implementation becomes paramount. On that basis, the following policy measures are hereby recommended;

- Strengthening institutional capacity in a decentralised education system is not a “quick fix” given limited financial resources in developing countries such as Zambia but that does not mean it is totally unachievable. But finances alone cannot achieve success. Therefore, there is need for political commitment as well for setting up a clear and strong regulatory framework to support implementation. Such a framework should clearly outline coordination arrangements. It should provide clear operational guidelines that specify power relations between and among members of the Board by clarifying their different roles and responsibilities.

- Setting up a strong regulatory (institutional) framework is one thing but ensuring that there are competent personnel to operationalize it is another. Given the circumstances in Chongwe and Solwezi, it could be useful to review the recruitment criteria and procedures in order to close the gap between actors' expected roles and their professional profiles. This measure can also be backed up by in-service training particularly among management team members in order to re-orient them with new knowledge and skills that match new demands since they may be too used to the old ways of doing things.
- Upward accountability may be commendable but in the absence of an effectively operating mechanism for downward accountability that provides for the voice of the people to be heard, implementation of educational decentralisation can suffocate. In light of the findings, management accountability relationships should be counterbalanced with downwards accountability of the 'governance group'. This can help to ensure stronger community voice and strengthen the spirit of shared responsibility which is an ingredient for increased efficiency. This could be achieved by assessing other existing structures at the Sub-district level in order to incorporate them into the governance body of the board.
- Granting sub-national structures full autonomy is said to have far-reaching implications but lack of meaningful autonomy may deprive them of the necessary flexibility which can be an effective strategy for encouraging innovation and change in educational practice. In view of the findings, it might perhaps be useful to give priority towards developing a management system which fosters complementarity in roles and authority between MoE HQ and the DEB including PTAs and possibly the community at large. Such a mechanism can serve as a hedge against the risks associated with abuse of authority within the DEB or excessive control from the centre.

## 9.4 The Way Forward

Since this study was only conducted in two districts, widening the geographical scope by covering more districts and schools may in future provide in-depth insights which would add to the existing body of knowledge on experiences regarding DEBs in Zambia. On the

other hand, since this study employed comparative case study design involving smaller sample of respondents, further investigation with mixed method with relatively larger sample may be necessary for achieving a much firmer basis for making policy recommendations.



## References

- Abu-Duhow, I. (1999). *School Based Management*. Paris: IIEP/UNESCO:  
<http://www.unesco.org/iiep>.
- Angus, L. (1994.). Educational policy research: Discovering problems and solution. In J. (. Smyth, *Qualitative Approaches in Educational Research*.(Delaide: Flinders Institute for the Study of Teaching). (pp. 15–26.). USA.: Adelaide: Flinders Institute for the Study of Teaching.
- Angus, L. (1994.). *Educational policy research: Discovering problems and solutions*. .
- Astle,J. Bryants,S & Hotham,C. (2011). School Choice and Accountability:Putting Parents in Charge. Retrieved from <http://www.centreforum.org/>
- Basit, T. (2003). Manual or electronic? The role of coding in qualitative data analysis. *Educational Research*, 45(2), pp. 143–154.
- Baugh,J.B,Hallcom,A.S & Harris,M.E. (2010). Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software: A Practical Guide Perspective for Applied Research. University of Arizona South.
- Belfield,C.R & Levin,H.M. (2002). The Effects of Competition Between Schools on Educational Outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 72, No. 2(2), 279–341. Retrieved 05 27, 2011, from <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/72/2/279.full.pdf+html>
- Berger,R.M & Patchener,M.A. (1988). *Implementing the Research Plan*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Bernard & Ryan. (2010). *Analysing Qualitative Data. Systematic Approaches*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Bray, M and Mukundan,M. (2004). The Decentralization of Education in Kerala State, India: Rhetoric and Reality. *In International Review of Education*, 50., 13-34.
- Bray, M. (1996). *Decentralization of Education: Community Financing*. Washington. Washington DC: The World Bank.
- Bray, M.admson,B & Manson M. (2007). *Comprative Education Research. Approaches and Methods*. *CERC Studies in Comparative Education 19*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Spring.
- Bryman. (2008). *Social Research Methods (3rd Ed)*. USA: Oxford University Press.

- Caldwell, B. (2008). Reconceptualising the self-managing school, *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership*. 36(2), 235–52.
- Canovan, M. (1999.). Trust the People. Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy. *Journal of Political Studies*. XLVIII., 2-16. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9248.00184/pdf>
- Carnoy, (1999). *Foundation of Educational Planning.Globalisation and Education Reform. What planners Need to Know*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Chalmers, A. (1999). *What is this Thing Called Science? (3rd ed.)*. New York: Open University Press.
- Cheema, G.S & Rondinelli ,D.A & Cheema.,(eds). (1983). *Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries*. Baverlly Hills, California.: SAGE Publication.
- Cohen, L., et al. (2000). *Research Methods in Education. 5th ed*. London: Routledge.
- Coleman & Earley. (2005). *Leadership and Management in Education; Cultures, Change and Content*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Coombe, T. (1967). "The Origins of Secondary Education in Zambia. Part I. Policy Making in the Thirties". *African Social Research, No 3*.
- Dahl, R. (1957). The Concept of Power. *Behavioral Sciences*. 201. Retrieved 8 18, 2010, from <http://65.99.230.10:81/collect/politics/index/assoc/HASHa8ee.dir/doc.pdf>
- De Grauwe, A & Lugaz,C. (2010). *Schooling and Decentralisation. Patterns and Policy Implications in Francophone West Africa*. Paris: IIEP/UNESCO.
- De Grauwe, A. (2005). Improving the Quality of Education through School-Based Management: Learning from International Experiences. In: *International Review of Education*.51 (4,. 269-287.
- Denzin,N.K & Lincoln,Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousands Oaks, California: SAGE Publication Inc.
- Derqui, G. (2010). Educational Decentralisation policies in Argentina and Brazil: Exploring New Trends. *Journal of Education Policy*, 562-578.  
doi:<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02680930110087825>
- Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists*. London: Routledge. London: Routledge.
- Di Grapello, E. (2004). *Educational Decentralisation and Accountability Relationships in Latin America. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3453*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

- Dillon, E. (2011). *The Road to Autonomy: Can Schools, Districts and Central Offices Find Their Way?* Washington DC: The Education Sector (Independent Analysis). Retrieved from <http://www.educationsector.org/publications/road-autonomy-can-schools-districts-and-central-offices-find-their-way>
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (1968). *Max Weber on Charisma and Institutional Building. Selected Papers, Edited & with the Introduction by the The Heritage of Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Ellerman, D. (2004). Autonomy in Education and Development. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education.*, 7(1), 3-14. Retrieved 1 12, 2012, from <http://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/cice/ellerman7-1.pdf>
- Elmore, F. (1983). School Decentralisation: Who gains? Who Loses. Retrived from Fronter 3rd March,2010. Faculty of Education. University of Oslo.
- Elmore, R. (1980). Backward Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Decisions. *Political Science Quarterly Journal.*, 94,( 4,), 601-616. Retrieved 03 2012, 17, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2149628>
- Fink, A. (2000). The Role of the Researcher in the Qualitative Research Process. A Potential Barrier to Archiving Qualitative Data. *Forum:Qualitative Social Research*, 1(3). Retrieved 2 5, 2010, from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1021/2201>
- Fiske, E. (1996.). *Decentralisation of Education. Politics and Consensus*. Washington DC.: The World Bank.
- Florestal,K & Cooper,R. (1997). *Decentralisation in Education.Legal Issues. Directions in Development*. Washington DC: The World Bank.
- Gershberg & Winkler. (2003). Education Decentralisation in Africa: A Review of Recent Policy and Practice. In L. a. Kpundeh., *Building State Capacity in Africa: New Approaches and Emerging Lessons* (p. Chapter10). Washington DC: World Bank Institute of Development Studies.
- Ghai, Y.P. & Regan,A.J. (1993). *The Law, Politics and Administration of Decentralisation in Papua New Guinea*. Boroko: National Research Institute.
- Glaser,B & Strauss,A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Newbury park, California: SAGE Publication.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research.The Qualitative Report, 8(4), 597-606. Retrieved 12 11, 2011, from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf>
- GRZ. (2002). *The National Decentralisation Policy. Towards Empowering the People*. Lusaka: Office of the President; Cabinet Office.

- GRZ. (2008). *Decentralisation Implementation Annual Report*. Lusaka: Ministry of Local Government & Housing Decentralisation Secretariat.
- GRZ. (2008). *National Decentralisation Report*. Lusaka: Decentralisation Secretariat; Ministry of Local Government and Housing.
- GRZ. (2009). *Decentralisation Implementation Plan*. Lusaka: Ministry of Local Government and Housing Decentralisation Secretariat.
- GRZ. (2009). *Educational Statistical Bulletin for 2009*. Lusaka: Directorate of Planning and Information; MoE.
- GRZ. (n.d.). *Fifth National Development Plan 2006-2010. Broad based Wealth and Job creation through Citizenry Participation and Technological Advancement*. Lusaka: MoFNP.
- Haddad, W.D & Demsky, T. (1995). *Fundamentals of Educational Planning. Educational Policy Process. Applied Framework*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Haddad, W.D & Demsky, T. (1995.). *Educational Policy Planning Process: An applied Framework. Fundamentals of Educational Planning*. 7 Place de Fontenoy, Paris.: UNESCO.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice (2nd ed.)*. London: Routledge.
- Hannaway, J & Carnoy, M. (1993). *Decentralisation and School Improvement. Can we Fulfil the Promise?* Jossey-Bass San Francisco.
- Hanson, E. (1990). "School Based Management and Educational Reforms in the United States and Spain". *Copmrative Education Review*. Vol.34.No.4., 523-537.
- Hanson, E. (1995). "Democratization and Decentralization in Colombian Education". *Comparative Education Review*., 39(1), 100-119. Retrieved 6 2011, 17, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1188984>
- Hanson, M. (1997). Educational decentralization: Issues and challenges. Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL). *Inter-American Dialogue*, (No.9), 3-16.
- Hanson, M. (1998). Strategies of Educational Decentralization: Key questions and Core issues. *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 36, issue 2., 1.
- Haug, B. (2009). *Educational Decentralization and Student Achievement. A Comparative Study Utilizing Data from PISA to Investigate a Potential Relationship between School Autonomy and Student Performance in Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway and Sweden*. Oslo: Faculty of Education. University of Oslo. .

- Held, D. (2006). *Models of Democracy*. Policy Press. 65 Bridge Street. UK.
- Hoppers, W. (2009). Participatory practices in policy-making: Negotiating democratic outcomes or manoeuvring for compliance? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 250–259. Retrieved from [www.elsevier.com/locate/ijedudev](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ijedudev)
- IOB. (2008). *Primary Education in Zambia. IOB Impact Evaluation Report on Policy and Operations*. The Hague: IOB Evaluation Dept. Retrieved from [www.minbuza.nl/iob.en](http://www.minbuza.nl/iob.en)
- Jonassen,D.H., Reeves,T.,& Hong,N. (1998b). Concept Mapping and other Formalisms as Mind Tools for Representing Knowledge. ALT-J, 2. *Journal of Interactive Learning*, 50-56.
- Kalsen. (2000). Decentralised Centralism: Framework for better understanding of Governance in the field of Education. *Journal of Education Policy*, PP525-538.
- Kanukisya, B. (2008). *Contemporary Adult Education Policies and Practices in Tanzania: Are They Meeting National Challenges? DUO Master Thesis*. Oslo: Faculty of Education. University of Oslo.
- Karlsen, G. (2010). Decentralised Centralism: Framework for a better understanding of governance in the field of education. *Journal of education policy*., 15(5), 525-538. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0268093000750001676>
- Katz, M. (1975). *Class, Bureaucracy and Schools: The illusion of Educational Change in America*. New York.: Praeger Publishers.
- Kelly, M. (1991). *Education in a Declining Economy*. Washington DC: The World Bank.
- Kelly, M. (1996). *The Origins and Development of Education in Zambia: From Pre-colonial era to 1996. A Book of Notes and Readings*. Lusaka: Image Publishers.
- Kimchi, J., Polivka, B., & Stevenson, J.S. . (1991). Triangulation: Operational Definitions. *Nursing Research*, 40(6),. *Methodology Corner*., 364-366.
- Kirk,J & Miller, M,L. (1986). *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Reseach. Qualitative Studies Series 1*. Newbury Park, California.: SAGE Publication.
- Krueger,R.A & Casey,A.C. (2000.). *Focus Groups. A Practical Guide for Applied Research (3rd Edition)*. California: Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publication.
- Kvale,S & Brinkmann,. (2009). *Interviews (2nd ed). Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. California: SAGE Publication.
- Lacey,A & Luff,D. (2001). Trend Focus for Research and Development in Primary Health Care. *Qualitative Data Analysis. Trend Focus Journal*., 2-26.

- LaRocque, N & Boyer, M. (2007). Decentralisation of School Management: Ideas From Abroad. *Economic Note- Education Series*. Retrieved from [http://www.iedm.org/files/fevrier07b\\_en.pdf](http://www.iedm.org/files/fevrier07b_en.pdf)
- Lauglo, J. (1995). Forms of Decentralisation and their Implications for Education. *Comparative Education*. Vol 31. No.1. Retrieved 03 10, 2010, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03050069529182>
- Lincoln & Guba. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, California: SAGE Publication Inc.
- Lincoln, Y.S & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publication.
- Litvack, J., et al. (1998). *Rethinking Decentralisation in Developing Countries*. Washington DC: World Bank. Retrieved from <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/content/book/9780821343500>
- Litvack, J., et al. (1998). *Rethinking Decentralisation in Developing Countries. Sector Studies Series*. Washington DC: World Bank. Retrieved from [http://www.google.no/books?hl=no&lr=&id=bVKUhft8rowC&oi=fnd&pg=PP7&q=re+thinking+decentralisation&ots=YWu0jvnIBL&sig=K0mfSNIUr8mgnwSQqYxLQXVWgno&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=re%20thinking%20decentralisation&f=false](http://www.google.no/books?hl=no&lr=&id=bVKUhft8rowC&oi=fnd&pg=PP7&q=re+thinking+decentralisation&ots=YWu0jvnIBL&sig=K0mfSNIUr8mgnwSQqYxLQXVWgno&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=re%20thinking%20decentralisation&f=false)
- Lugaz & De Grauwe. (2007). Educational Governance at Local Level: "District Education Offices in French Speaking West Africa: Autonomy, Professionalism and Accountability.". In: *Prospect*, 37 (1), 113-125.
- Lugaz, C. a. (2010). *Schooling and Decentralisation; Patterns and Policy Implications in Francophone West Africa*. Paris: IIEP, UNESCO.
- Lungu, F. (1993). Education Policy Making in Zambia. The Case of Higher Education for Africans from 1924-1964. *The Journal of Negro History*, 78, No.4, 207-232.
- Maha, A. (1997). Governance of Education Boards in Papua New Guinea: The Role of Education Board of Governance. *International Review of Education*., 190-195.
- Maideira, R. (2007). *The Effects of Decentralisation on Schooling: Evidence from from the Sao Paulo State's Education Reforms*. University of Sao Paulo.
- Mawhood, P. (1993). *Local Governments in the Third World: Experiences of Decentralization in Tropical Africa*. Africa Institute of South Africa.
- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative Research Design. An Interactive Approach (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publication.

- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. (2nd.ed). California: Thousands Oaks.
- McGinn, N. & Welsh, T. (1999). *Decentralisation of Education. why, when , what and how?* Series: *Fundamentals of Education Planning*, 64. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
- Mcnerney, P. (2003). Moving into Dangerous Territory? Educational Leadership in a Devolving Education System. *International Journal of Leadership in Education. Theory and Practice.*, 6( 1), 57–72. Retrieved 7 6, 2011, from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1360312022000069996>
- Merrick, E. (1999). An Exploration of Quality in Qualitative Research. Are Reliability and Validity Relevant? In M. & Kopala, *Using Qualitative Methods in Psychology* (p. Chapter3). Thousands Oaks, California: SAGE Publication.
- MoE & SNV. (2008). *Governance in Education. A Handbook for Planning and Decision making. Education Boards Services*. Lusaka: MoE.
- MoE & SNV. (2009). *Report of the Investigative Study into the Practices, Processes and Operational Environment of selected District Education Boards in Central, Lusaka, Northern, North-western and Western Provinces*. Lusaka: Critical Consultancy & Management Skills.
- MoE. (1996). *Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education*. Lusaka: Zambia Education Publishing House.
- MoE. (2003). *Ministry of Education Strategic Plan: 2003 - 2007*. Lusaka: MoE.
- MoE. (2007). *Education Sector National Implementation Framework 2008-2010. Implementing the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP)*. Lusaka: MoE.
- MoE. (2010.). *Ministry of Education Sector Devolution Plan*. Lusaka.: MoE.
- Mukandala, R. (1998). Decentralisation and Democratisation in Tanzania. Occasional Paper No.46. University of Iowa. Retrieved from [www.leat.or.tz/publications/decentralisation/](http://www.leat.or.tz/publications/decentralisation/)
- Mukwena, R. (2001). Situating Decentralisation in Zambia in a Political Context. African Training & Research Centre for Administration for Development. Vol. 12(No.3), 7-33. Retrieved from <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/CAFRAD/UNPAN017692.pdf>
- Mwanakatwe, J. (1974). *The Development of Education in Zambia Since Independence. Chapter II*. Oxford University Press.
- Myron, L. (1989). Privatisation and Educational Choice. Connecticut Educational Institute, St. Martins Press, New York. 230-237.

- Naidoo. (2002). Educational Decentralisation in Sub Saharan Africa. Expoused Theories and Theories in Use. paper presented at the CIES Annual Conference. 10-24. Retrieved 03 27, 2010, from <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED472263.pdf>
- Naidoo, J.P & Kong, P. (2003). Improving Education Management Systems in the Context of Decentralization in Africa. Background paper for ADEA Study: The Challenge of Learning – Improving the Quality of Basic Education.
- Namukas & Buye. (2009). Decentralisation and Education in Africa: The Case of Uganda.
- OECD. (2006). Assessing Scientific, Reading and Mathematical Literacy. A Framework for PISA. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/63/35/37464175.pdf>. 04.12.2011
- Patton. (2002). *"Qualitative Research and Evaluative Methods"* (3rd Ed. . London: SAGE Publication Inc.
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park: SAGE Publication.
- Peterson, K. D. et al. (1995.). Principals' Skills and Knowledge for Shared Decision-Making. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools ERIC document #ED386827. 1-7. Retrieved 7 28, 2011, from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED386827.pdf>
- Pidgeon & Henwood. (2004). Grounded Theory. In Bryman and Hardy (eds). Handbook of Data Analysis. 625-648.
- Polkinghorne, D. (2005). Language and Meaning: Data Collection in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*., 52( 2), 137–145. doi:DOI: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137
- Pope, M & Mays, T. (2000). Analysing Qualitative Data. *British Medical Journal*., 114-116.
- Report., F. G. (2007). *Decentralisation and Local Democracy in the World*. Washington DC: United Cities and Local Democracy, World Bank.
- Rideout, W. (2000). Globalisation and Decentralisation in Sub Saharan Africa: Focus on Lesotho. In N. a. Stromquist, *Globalisation and Education. Integration and Contestation Across Culture* (p. Chapter 13). USA: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher Inc.
- Robson, C. (1993). *Real World Research*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rondinelli, D. (1999). What is Decentralisation? in Lavack, J. and Seddon, J. (eds). Decentralisation Briefing Notes. World Bank Institute Working Papers. Washington DC, World Bank .



- Rudestam, K.E & Newton, R.R. . (1992). *Surviving Your Dissertation*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Rudestam, K.E and Newton, R.R. (1992). *Surviving Your Dissertation*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Saasa, O.S. and Steffensen, J., et al. (1999). *Fiscal Decentralisation and Sub National Finances in Relations to Infrastructure and Service Provision in Zambia*. NALAD (Denmark) and INESOR (University of Zambia), Lusaka. Retrieved from [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNACN735.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACN735.pdf)
- Saito, F. (2000). Decentralisation for Participatory Development in Uganda. Limitations and Prospects. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 1-27. Retrieved from <http://www.world.ryukoku.ac.jp/~fumis96/docs/jic2000.pdf>
- Sharma, C. K. (2005). "When Does Decentralization Deliver? The Dilemma of Design." *South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studies* . 6(1)., 38-45.
- Smyth, J. (. (1993.). *A Socially Critical View of the Self-Managing School* (London: Falmer Press). London: Falmer Press.
- Snelson. (1974). *Education Development in Northern Rhodesia; 1883-1945. Chapter IV*. Lusaka: NECZAM.
- Snelson, P. (1974). *Education Development in Northern Rhodesia; 1883 -1945. Chapter IV*. Lusaka: NECZAM.
- Stewart, F. (1996). Globalisation and Education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 16(4), 327–333. doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/s0738-0593\(97\)87232-x](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/s0738-0593(97)87232-x)
- Stromquist, N & Monkman, K. (2000). *Globalisation and Education: Intergration and Contestation Across Culture*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, USA.
- Tordoff, W. (1980). "Rural Administration", in W. Tordoff (ed), *Administration in Zambia*. 185-214.
- UNESCO. (2005). *Educational Policies and Strategies. Decentralisation in Education: National Policies and Practices*. Paris: Place De Fontenoy.
- USAID. (2007). *Identifying the Impact of Educational Decentralisation on the Quality of Education*. (Winkler, D & Ling Yeo, B. eds). *Equip 2, Working Papers*. Retrieved from [http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-DecentQuality\\_WP.pdf](http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-DecentQuality_WP.pdf)
- USAID. (2009). *Democractic Decentralisation Programming Handbook*. Washington, DC: USAID. Retrieved from [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/democracy\\_and\\_governance/publications/pdfs/DDPH\\_09\\_22\\_09\\_508c.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/DDPH_09_22_09_508c.pdf)

- Walter, R. (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle\_ L' Ouverture Publishers.
- Weiler. (1990). Educational Evaluation and policy analysis. Comparative Perspectives on Educational Decentralisation: An excersise in contradiction? *SAGE Journals*, Vol. 12, (No. 4), 433-448. doi:10.3102/01623737012004433
- Wheeldon. J. & Faubert, J. (2009). Framing Experience: Concept Maps, Mind Maps, and Data Collection in Qualitative Research. *international Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(3), 68 - 83. Retrieved 1 17, 2012, from <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/view/1765>
- Winkler. (1993). Fiscal Decentralisation and Accountability in Education. Experiences in Poor Countries. In Hannaway, Jane and Martin Carnoy (eds): Decentralisation and School Improvement. Can we Fulfil the Promise? *Journal of International Education Policy Studies*.
- Winkler, D & Yeo, B. (2007). Identifying the Impact of Educational Decentralisation on the Quality of Education. Working Paper on Education Quality Improvement Programme (EQUIP2). Retrieved 10 12, 2009, from [http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-DecentQuality\\_WP.pdf](http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-DecentQuality_WP.pdf)
- Wohlstetter, G. B. (1995). Establishing School-Based Decision-Making Groups: Problems Confronted by Three Secondary Schools in Australia. ERIC document # ED390127. 7-9. Retrieved 7 28, 2011, from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED390127.pdf>
- WorldBank. (2008). *What is School Based Management? Education Development Network*. Washngtone DC.
- Yin, R. (1984). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. California: Bayerly Hills.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publication.

# **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Interview Guides**

### **I: National Level Interview Guide:**

#### **Background information and general questions**

1. Male/female; Academic qualifications; current and previous designation?
2. Duration of service and work experience related to educational decentralization policy?
3. What precisely does the policy say about educational decentralization?
4. What main challenges does the policy seek to address in the sector?
5. According to the policy, what are the district education boards supposed to do?
6. What institutional capacity measures have been put in place to ensure good implementation of the policy?
7. Do you think district education boards have the necessary freedom to implement the educational decentralization policy? What are the reasons behind your views?
8. How do the existing accountability mechanisms affect the implementation of the educational decentralization at the district level?
9. How conducive is the relationship between MoE headquarters and district education boards officials in as far as the implementation of educational decentralization policy is concerned? What are the reasons for your answer?

10. Who do you think has most influence in decisions about different issues between the management team members and the governance body within the board? Why do you think so?
11. How has the establishment of district education boards influenced the delivery of basic education services at the district and school level?
12. What impact [expected or unexpected] have the district education boards had so far?
13. What practical lessons do you draw for bridging the gap between policy and practice in as far as the educational decentralization policy visa-vis establishment of district education boards is concerned?
14. Do you have any other comments on how to bridge the gap between policy and practice in as far as educational decentralization policy is concerned?

## **II: District Level Interview Guide:**

### Background information

1. Male/female; current and previous designation or position in the board?
2. Duration of service in the position and work experience related to working of the board in the district?
3. How knowledgeable are you about decentralization policy in the Zambian education sector?
4. What has educational decentralization come to mean for education officials like you at the district level?
5. According to the policy, what are the district education boards supposed to do?

### General questions

1. What is the composition of your board?
2. How are resolutions made and executed in board meetings?
3. What sort of feedback mechanisms are put in place to ensure effective flow of information across all members of the board?

4. Who do the DEB secretary and board chairperson report to on issues of governance and management?
5. What institutional capacity measures have been put in place to ensure good implementation of the policy?
6. What, based on your experience, do you think is/are the critical institutional capacities related challenges? How can these be addressed?
7. Do you think your board has the necessary flexibility to implement the educational decentralization policy? Why do you have that impression?
8. What are your views/concerns in as far as accountability mechanisms are concerning in the implementation of the educational decentralization policy?
9. Whose voice counts between management and governance members when it comes to issues of planning and decision making proper?
10. How does your board show people in the district that it is a legitimate body of the government responsible for basic education service delivery?
11. Is the participation of governance members in your board felt by people in the district? If not why?
12. How are school PTAs represented in the boards? To what extent are PTA's concerns heard?
13. Is it possible to say that your board has had an impact on desired policy outcomes or changes at the school level? Why do you have this impression?
14. What are the main challenges affecting the operations of your board?
15. What lessons do you draw for bridging the gap between policy and practice in as far as educational decentralization policy visa-vis the establishment of education boards is concerned?

### **III: School Level; Focus Group Discussion Guide**

1. How has educational decentralization influenced your responsibilities as PTA members at the school level?
2. Do you think the education board in your district performs its functions according to your expectations as PTA members or executes its mandate in accordance with the stipulated policy guidelines? If not, why?

3. In which way has the adoption of the educational decentralization policy influenced the performance of your responsibilities as PTAs? Do you think your roles in the provision of basic education are now different from the past?
4. What changes (good results) at the school level are attributed to the implementation of the educational decentralization policy in general or establishment of the district education boards in particular?
5. Do you think your concerns as PTA members are adequately addressed by your board? If not, why?
6. What are the main challenges that affect your working relationship with the board?
7. Suggest ways you think both your education board and PTA you belong can enhance effective and efficient delivery of basic education services?
8. What lessons do you draw for bridging the gap between policy and practice in as far as educational decentralization policy vis-a-vis the establishment of education boards is concerned?

## Appendix B: A Guiding Framework for Interviews' References

Abbreviation	Meaning	Position in the Organization	Respondent Code
MoE1	Ministry of Education Headquarters	Policy maker /Planner	<i>MoE1/05.09.10/Edu/dec</i>
NLI2	National level informants from MOE's Cooperating partners(donors)	Senior Education planner/advisor	<i>NLI2/10.09.10/Edu/dec</i>
NLI3	National level informants from other stakeholders (CSOs, Academia,etc)	Education program officer, Program manager, University professor/lecturer	<i>NLI3/10.09.10/Edu/dec</i>
MoEP1	Ministry of Education-Province	Provincial education officer	<i>MoEP1/05.10.10/Edu/dec</i>
MoEP2	Ministry of Education-Province	Provincial education standard officer	<i>MoEP2/17.09.10/Edu/dec</i>
PLI3	Ministry of Education: Provincial level stakeholders (CSOs,etc)	project coordinator, education advisor, consultants	<i>PLI3/05.10.10/cop/Edu/dec</i>
DEB01	District Education Board Member	DEB secretary	<i>DEB#1/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec</i>
DEB02	District Education Board Member	District education standards officer (DESO)	<i>DEB#2/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec</i>
DEB03	District Education Board Member	Junior officers	<i>DEB#3/20-30.09.10/Edu/dec</i>
DEB04	District Education Board Member from the governance side(external)	Board chairperson + other board members from community	<i>DEB#4/10/10/Edu/dec</i>
PTA01	Parents teacher association	PTA Chairperson	<i>PTA#1/09/10/Edu/dec</i>
PTA02	Parents teacher association	Head teachers	<i>PTA#2/09/10/Edu/dec</i>
PTA03	Parents teacher association	Senior/junior teachers	<i>PTA#3/09/10/Edu/dec</i>
PTA04	Parents teacher association	Parents	<i>PTA#4/09/10/Edu/dec</i>

## Appendix C: Fieldwork Introductory Letter (UIO)



**UNIVERSITY OF OSLO**  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Page 1 of 1

**To whom it may concern**

**Department of Education**  
P.O. Box 1092 Blindern  
N-0317 Oslo

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2010  
**Your ref.:**  
**Our ref.:** k.e.jensen@ped.uio.no

Visiting address:  
Sem Sælandsvei 7, Helga Eng's Building, 540  
Telephone: +47 22 84 44 75  
Fax: +47 22 85 42 50  
[www.uv.uio.no](http://www.uv.uio.no)

### **Assistance in the conduction of fieldwork**

This is to confirm that the Zambian student **Amos Sikayile**, born 17.08.1978, is a second year student in the Master programme in Comparative and International Education at the Department of Education at the University of Oslo, Norway.

In the second year our students are required to write a Master thesis of 80 to 120 pages. This thesis should preferably be based on field studies conducted in countries outside of Norway. The fieldwork may incorporate interviews with educational practitioners and decision-makers, classroom observation and documentary analysis. The type of data gathered should of course be discussed with the relevant authorities. It is our hope that the work produced by the student will not only benefit him in his academic career but also be of use in the future.

Amos Sikayile will be conducting his fieldwork in Zambia between the months of September and October 2010 (1<sup>th</sup> of September 2010 – 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2010).

We kindly ask you to give him all possible assistance during his fieldwork in Zambia.

Yours sincerely,

  
Kjerstin Eek Jensen  
Senior Executive Officer



## Appendix D: Fieldwork Clearance Letter (MoE Lusaka)

All communications should be addressed to  
the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education  
Not to any individual by name

Telephone: 250855/251315/251283  
251293/211318/251291  
251003/251319/250760



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

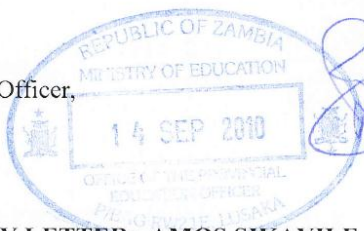
In reply please quote:

No. ....

P.O. BOX 50093  
LUSAKA

7<sup>th</sup> September, 2010

The Provincial Education Officer,  
Lusaka Province  
Northern Province



**RE: INTRODUCTORY LETTER: AMOS SIKAYILE**

I write to introduce to your office the above mentioned student at the University of Oslo Institute of Education Research in Norway. The student is conducting field work on Education Decentralisation Policy in Zambia.

In view of the above, he would like to carry out a series of interviews with Provincial, District and School officials and members of the Parents-Teacher Associations.

Mr. Sikayile intends to carry out his research in Chongwe District (Lusaka Province) and Solwezi District (Northern Province) respectively.

Kindly facilitate his interviews with the target respondents.

Yours faithfully,

Kadange V. Mvula  
Chief Education Officer – Education Boards Services section  
For/Permanent Secretary  
**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**